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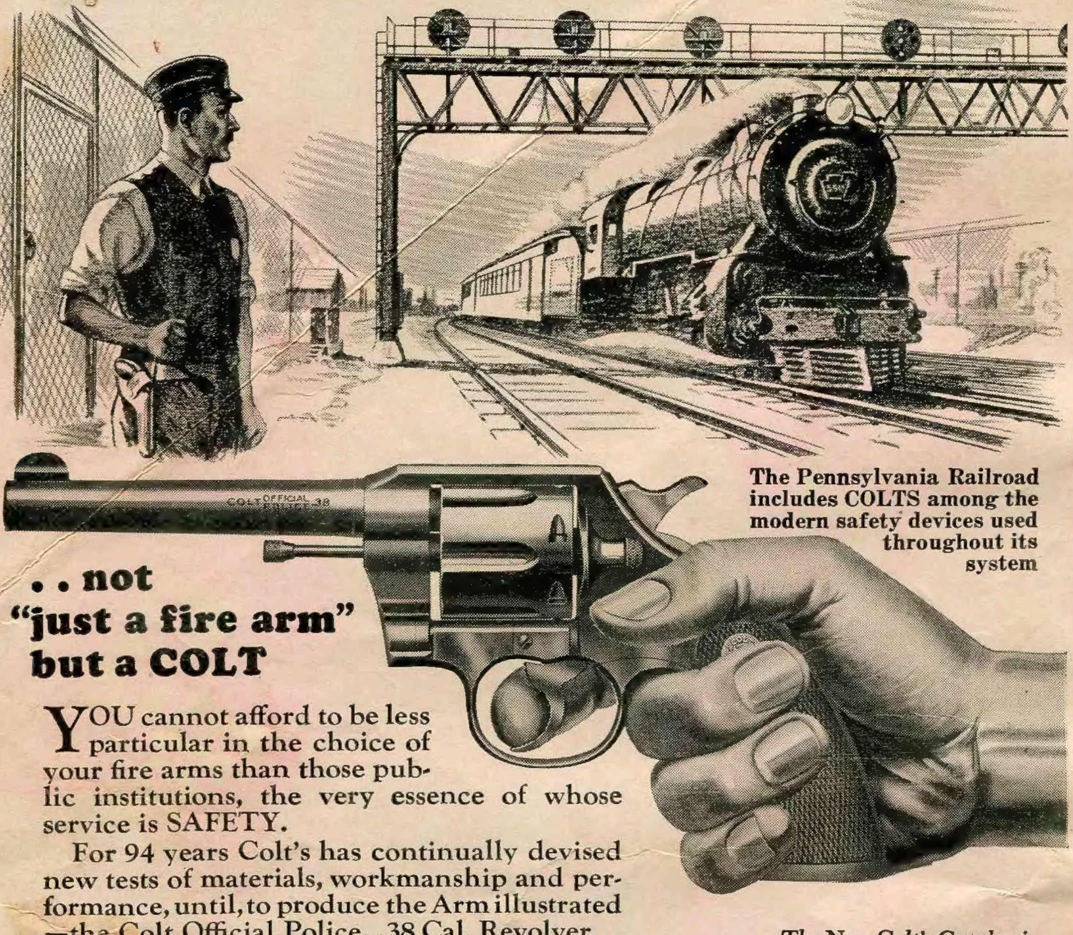

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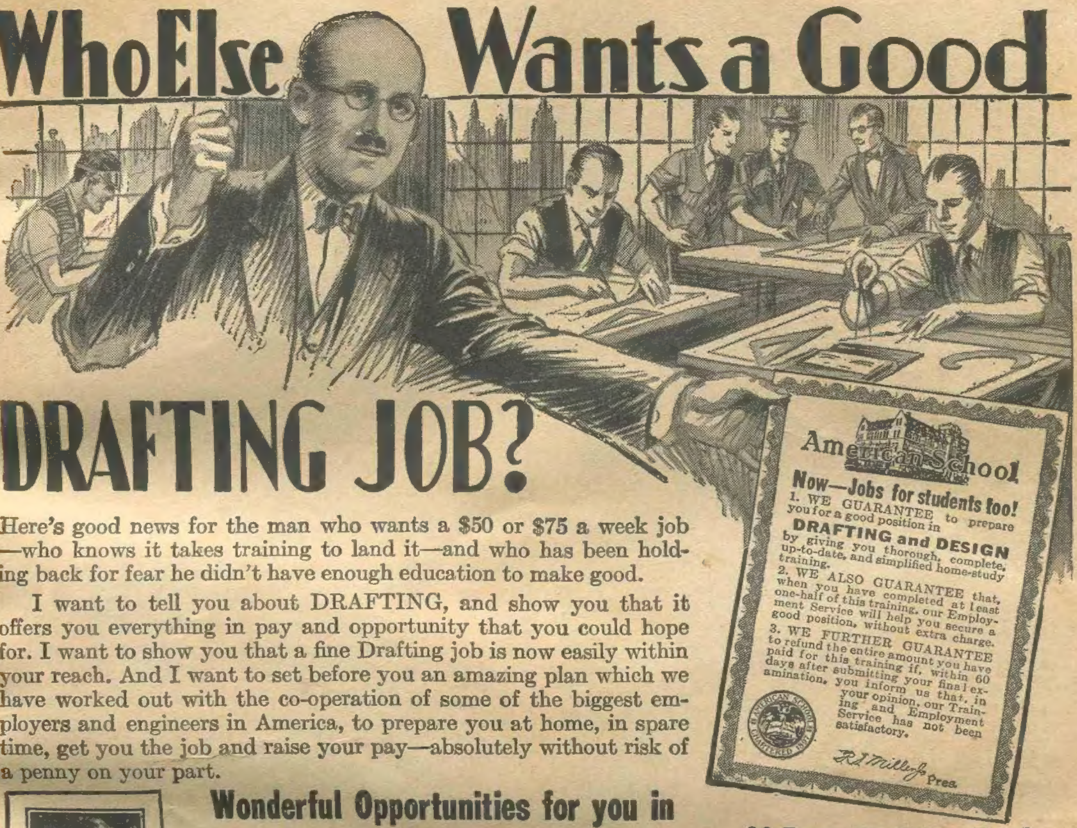

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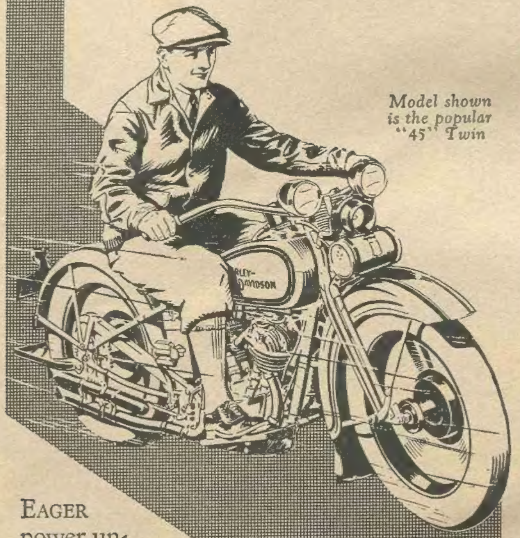

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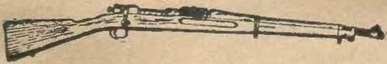

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CONTENTS

for February 1st

1930
Vol. LXXIII No. 4

Anthony M. Rud
EDITOR

Cry Havoc! . . . . Redvers 2
Part I of a Two-Part Novel of the World War

Facts An' Figgers On Sheep . . Whiskers Beck 40

The Bond Of Bully Haines . . . L. Patrick Greene 42
A Story of the Rhodesian Bush

The Sailors' Flophouse . . . . Captain Mansfield 61

Consistent Anyhow . . . . . . Talbot Mundy 62
A Strange Story of English Youth

Overtrained . . . . Harry G. Huse 75
A Humorous Tale of Montana

Chained (*A Poem*) . . . . . Bill Adams 80

Dead Man's Road . . . . . . William Fort 82
A Story of the Racketeers

Mystery Mountain . . . . . . Allan Vaughan Elston 94
A Novelette of Murder and Detection

Tiger Hunting In Big Tree Forests E. A. Guest 123

The Gold Louis . . . . Walter Duranty 126
A Story of Peace and War

Kavkaz, Granddaddy Of Polo . . Val Lewton 130

The Mother Curse . . . . . . Glenn Macaulay 132
A Story of Siam

A Female Robinson Crusoe . . . Arthur Woodward 140

A Knight Of The Crescent . . . General Rafael de Nogales 142
The Further Adventures of a Famous Fighter

Mavericks . . . . W. C. Tuttle 152
Concluding a Novel of Hashknife and Sleepy

The Camp-Fire 181 Ask Adventure 187 Trail Ahead 192

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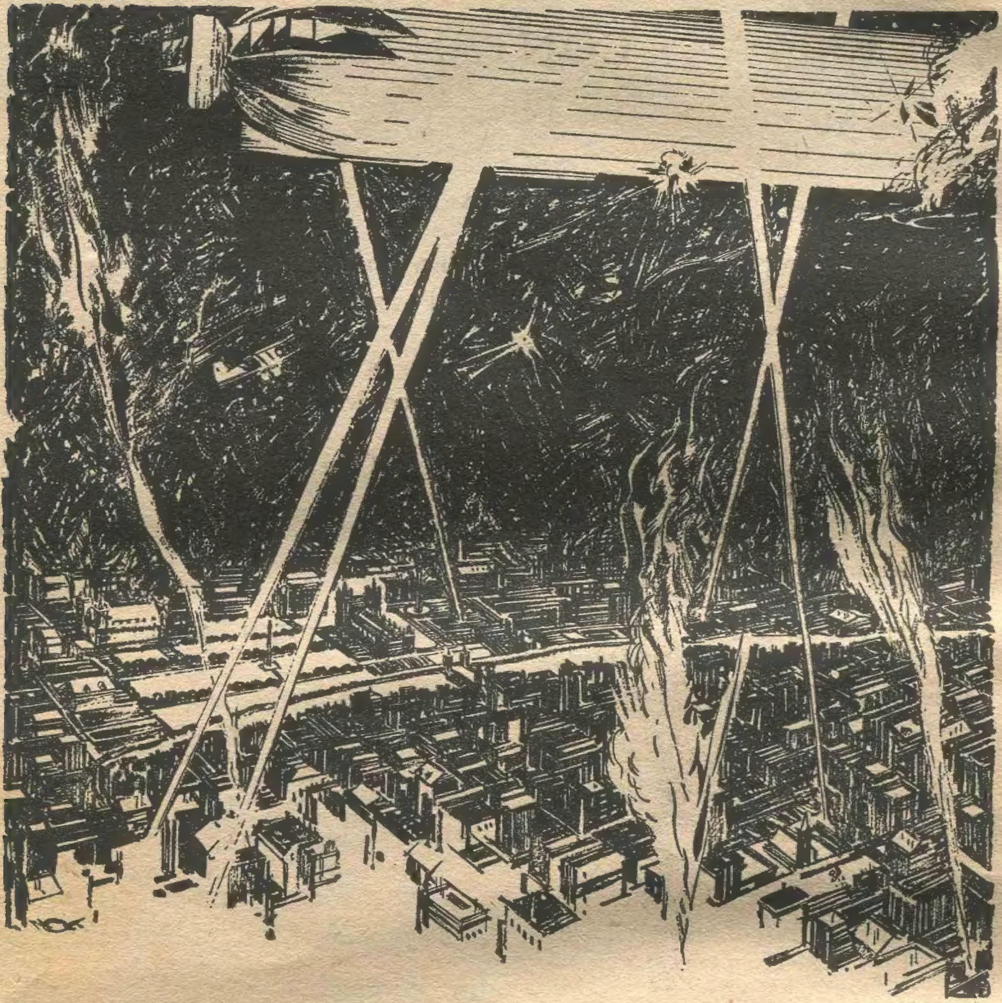
CRY HAVOC!



CHAPTER I

FOR KING AND COUNTRY

MY MOTHER was not like other mothers—the kind you read about—for to begin with I wasn't wanted. There were two brothers older than I, enough older to seem grown up. Gordon was tall, fair, handsome, suave, like his mother; Bob was like Gordon, except that where Gordon displayed only a momentary interest in things, Bob displayed a heat of passion, and won his way. Mother loved him too, but not so much as Gordon, who was the first and in her image. I was different, an Ishmael, tall and dark and awkward.

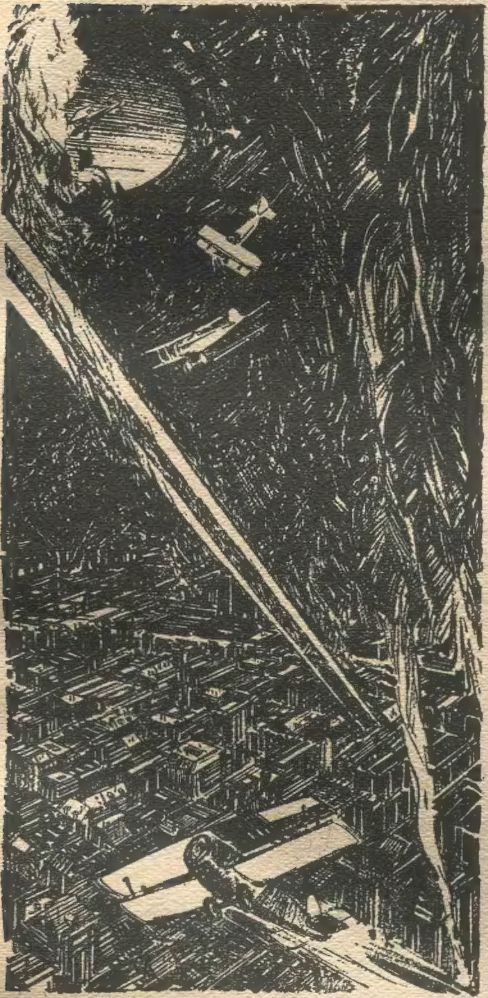
Dad and I were much closer to one another as a result. He—God bless him—

By

REDVERS

PRESENTING A NOVEL BY A NEW WRITER, WHICH THE EDITORS CONSIDER THE FINEST STORY OF THE WORLD WAR SINCE LEONARD H. NASON'S "CHEVRONS"

A NOVEL IN TWO PARTS



took me in the real sporting spirit of his family, a line of Empire Loyalists.

But I found a mother at last. A long gawky boy of ten I was, with the propitiatory, ingratiating look of a half starved mongrel dog. The local butcher needed a boy to run messages after school and on Saturdays, and was willing to pay one dollar and a half a week for the work. I applied and found the man out, but his wife was there, looking after the shop. She was a woman, still in the thirties. She was clever, probably lonely, and we liked each other at once. Perhaps she scarcely knew at first that she was becoming my mother, but I worshipped her, adored her.

One day Dad came to fetch me from the store for some reason. Mrs. Braithwaite had not met him, and I awkwardly introduced them. Dad lingered, and I stood by Mrs. Braithwaite, her hand on my head ruffling my hair, while she gazed out of the window.

I faced Dad a little defiantly but didn't move. I loved to have her ruffle my hair. They talked casually, then suddenly Dad said—

"Lionel seems to have found both home and a mother here."

She half turned to him, and for a minute was silent, then she said lightly:

"No, not a mother. Lionel and I are just children of the storm who get along fine, don't we, Lionel?"

When I was fourteen we moved from our old home. For a year Mother had nagged, stormed and cried, till we moved over to the west end of the city. The boys liked it because we were nearer to the park, and the lake for swimming. For me the important thing was that I was a long way from Mrs. Braithwaite. But I still managed to see her. I would take the street car by myself, and wait patiently at the transfer corners, looking at the strange people. And when I reached her house she welcomed me just the same as before.

Since it is of my life as a soldier that I wish to tell, I shall skip lightly over these first years.

Today some romance still hangs over the days of the Great War, when millions of men went forward bravely, brilliantly, to die. We still mouth of the survival of the fittest, when our civilization is denying the theory. Ever since the dawn of history one kind of man has died before his time, and that type is the strongest and ablest among men. Why did they die? For the protection of the weak, once somebody had started the conflict. We make special efforts to prolong the lives of the unfit, and then send the strongest men out to die for their protection. It is a farce, a burlesque.

Toronto—the city of Tories and United Empire Loyalists, the city of Imperialism handed down from father to son, the city of my birth, the city that I loved, and still love for its peace and serenity and hominess—went mad, stark, staring, rabidly mad. Gangs of university students and civilians marched up and down the thoroughfares looking for Germans, demolished a German club in King Street, raided the German consulate, finally ending at the armories, where they shouted for a chance to get at the Germans. Then they went home, home to their wives, who pricked them down to normal like the gas bags they were.

My brothers were men by this time, and came and went as they pleased.

Bob seemingly was very popular with the girls, with his devil-may-care air. Gordon was more cool, more suave, planned campaigns to gain his objective and, I gathered, usually won it. At least, one night a girl came to the house, went into the sitting room with mother, and I heard sobs alternating with mother's strident voice.

The sobs grew farther apart, the street door slammed, and Mother came back to where I was sitting, puffing, looking virtuous, and snorting—

"Humph! Indeed! Indeed!"

Mothers are a sex to themselves. There are not just two sexes but three—men, women, and mothers.

The girl's father came that night, and he and Dad were closeted together for a long time. When I went to bed, Mother was listening at the head of the stairs to their talking. She did not seem to see me either, and I went into my room. Then complete silence settled upon the house for hours, a silence that fairly shrieked.

Then, steps on the veranda, shouts, laughs—a girl's laughter, too. Gordon and a girl were there. I could tell by the voices. Then Bob's voice:

"Hello, Dad, old scout, what do you think? Gord and I enlisted in the army, and I married Edith. Meet my wife, Mr. Thor." A shriek from Mother; *patter, patter* down the stairs.

"Oh, oh! My boys! My boys! Surely you haven't joined the army? And married, *married!* Oh, my poor boy, she must have tempted you—why, you are only a child. Oh, oh, oh!"

Then Dad's voice, very quiet, yet so distinct it made me shiver.

"Gordon, I want to see you; come in here."

"Sure, Dad. What do you want?"

Later the study door opened.

Then Gordon's voice, quiet but with a new tone in it that I couldn't place.

"Oh, Mother, shut up! I'll marry her tomorrow. Now for heaven's sake let me go to bed in peace. Good night, Dad. Good night, Mr. Davidson. I'll surely be at your house in the morning. And tell her—tell her I do like her and am only too glad to have her accept me. Tell her that. Now, Mother, go to bed and keep quiet."

Gordon was a man.

The next week was one of hysterics on Mother's part, and continuous denunciations of Dad.

"Why don't you stop them from going? Oh, I wish you were young enough to go!" or "If my boys are killed you will be a murderer for allowing them to go. Oh, I hate you for looking on complacently. You actually think they should go. I hate you, hate you!"

And she put me in my place with:

"It's a pity you aren't old enough to go in their place—you are no good anyway—it would be a pleasure to be rid of you."

Her pose to strangers was:

"Yes, my boys are going; one can't stop them, and I know my duty. I am terribly wounded to see them go, but still they are brave and gallant lads. And that is the cross mothers have to bear. I *am* proud of them."

Then came the day when my brothers left on their picnic trip for the old country. That is how they regarded it. Time and again I heard them tell of the fun they would have in England. They figured the war would be over and nicely settled in six months. Bob's exact words were:

"Darn it, I wish the war wouldn't be over. I would like to get a crack at it."

Gordon, while agreeing with Bob, seemed quieter since his marriage. When some neighbors complimented him on his patriotism, he said:

"Patriotism, bunk! If we're Canadians, we are going for a holiday and a little adventure. If we are English, we enlist to get a trip 'ome to the old land. If this war lasts three years, as Kitchener says it will, it will be the guys who enlist next year who will be doing it out of patriotism. Bob thinks we are going to have a swell holiday, but I'm a little doubtful."

And so, regarding it as a great lark, did the Canadian Contingent entrain for the war. Mother and Dad and I went to the station to see them off. I envied them and wished I were a man and that I could go along.

My brothers were dressed hodge-podge, part old militia uniforms of the Q.O.R, part civilian. They looked funny. At the station, all I can remember is frantic cheers, catcalls, chalk marks all over the coaches, "On to Berlin", etc. Shouts of: "Give 'em one for me." "Bring home the German sausage." Mother was crying and waving her handkerchief, while the two brides were silent, with veils over their faces, and Dad stood with a face like stone.

The train began to move, which was the signal for more and louder shouts, as heads appeared again at the windows of the cars, waving goodby, some throwing kisses and even crying. Then the train took the bend, went out of sight, and for a moment there was absolute silence. Not a person moved; time seemed to have stopped. The angel of death or some grim presence hovered over all and shouted something in our ears. I heard him distinctly, saying, "Never forget, this is your last sight of them; never forget, your last sight." A woman sobbed and sobbed. We sneaked away, the whole multitude shuffling furtively from the station while each looked at the other to see if any one besides himself had heard the dread words.

Dad went down to business while I took Mother home. The street cars were jammed to suffocation. We had to stand for one solid hour in a sweltering, gasping, jostling mass of people. As soon as I had delivered Mother at our house (she had not spoken one word since Dad had gone), I hurried off to the lake for a swim, and came home feeling soothed and at peace with the world. Dad was home, and looked like a wounded dog, as he shook the fire, his eyes liquid. But it was my turn again, and as soon as Mother saw me she started.

"What do you think of that heartless, cold blooded son of yours now? What do you think he did as soon as he came home? Went swimming, *swimming!* He has no heart. He is a devil."

Poor Dad said nothing, but shook the fire a little harder.

Whenever Dad would sit back at night for a quiet smoke and read, she would begin:

"Oh, if only my poor boys could have comforts like you. There they are on the hard, cold ground with nothing over them."

Dad would go down to the cellar.

Or at meal times. I was a growing boy of sixteen, just coming into manhood. I needed lots of food, but whenever I asked for a second helping, it would be—

"There you are, you big, lazy lout, gorging yourself, and your poor brothers starving."

It promptly killed my appetite.

We received news fitfully from the old country, most of it through the newspapers. From Bob and Gordon we received little besides demands for parcels of food, clothes and money. The papers reported an outbreak of spinal meningitis. Bob said in one letter that his impressions of England consisted of three things: mud, rain and more mud.

Neither squealed when they found that the war and the army were not a joke after all. They were like Dad. They found that the picnic trip was not just what they had anticipated, but took it like men. News in the papers was never reliable, but the day came when they announced the arrival in France of the Canadians.

They were in France. Mother became even worse; nag, nag, nag, morning, noon and night. Bedlam struck our house one morning. I was in bed when I heard Mother scream for Dad. He came out of the cellar, where he had been cleaning the furnace.

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Oh, God! My boys are gone, killed. Oh, God! My Bob, my Gordon, my Bob, killed! How can I stand it? Oh, if it were only you or Lionel, or somebody no use!"

She kept it up, and I heard Dad's voice, soothing, quiet. I had to go down into that. I will never forget it. In the kitchen was a newspaper on the table, Mother sobbing and wringing her hands, and Dad comforting her.

I looked at the paper. Huge red headlines.

CANADIANS IN BATTLE
HOLD THE LINE AGAINST TERRIBLE ODDS
Gas Used by Germans. Heavy Casualties

I looked around. Dad was still trying to soothe Mother. I did not see her. He was dying a hundred deaths, and I was the lone mourner. Fury filled me suddenly.

"Mother! Shut up! Shut up, for heaven's sake. You are not hurt. Shut up and think of somebody else for awhile. Think about the boys. You don't care whether they're killed or not. You just want to show off. Shut up, I say!"

She quieted as though I had struck her, and looked at me with eyes of pure hate.

Dad tried to remonstrate with me, but I was roused. She gave in finally and started to get breakfast, and Dad went back to the cellar. That day passed and the next and the next.

The papers were very cautious, and published lists of casualties. Then the family across the street received a telegram. Their son was killed. I heard the news from the daughter, who went to school with me. I said nothing to Mother, but she found out by telephone. She had thought so much about it that she really began to suffer. She became a wraith flitting across the street, out for walks, anywhere. Dad and I got our own meals, made the beds and did the housework.

ONE NIGHT, when Mother was across the street, and Dad and I had just finished the dishes and he sat smoking and reading the paper, while I read a book of Jules Verne's, the doorbell rang, like the first screaming shell in a battle. Mother never would answer the bell. We both started, and Dad looked at me as though to say, "You go," then slowly dragged himself to his feet, and went marching out. I heard the door open, Dad speak, and a boy's voice answer some pleasantry. The door closed, then silence again, dead silence, as if the heart of the world had stopped beating.

I heard the rip of an envelope, one and then another. *Two.* I stood up, bracing myself, watching the door. Then in the doorway I saw him. As God is my judge, he was dead. He walked and moved, but he was dead. He stared at me, recognized me, then a struggle began. That poor soul that had taken so much came back, and he lived, lived again. I ran toward him. His hand moved over my head. Then his voice, sounding far away:

"Lionel, I want you to go down to your aunt's, my sister's, tonight, and stay there. Don't come back for two days, anyway. Hurry now, and get ready." His voice sounded very tired, and he went over and sat down.

I was bewildered at this, but obediently went and packed. At the door, when leaving, I asked him—

"Is it both, Dad?"

His eyes grew soft.

"Yes, kid, it is both, both."

Twenty-five years to educate them. Both. Bob was going to take over the business soon. Gordon was going to be a doctor. Both, both.

"Hurry, son!" He looked across the street.

And I left, deserted my post. To this day I castigate myself for it. I left Dad to stand it alone. But I did not know then why he sent me away. I was hurt, if anything. But I understand now.

Several times Dad tried to enlist, but he was turned down time after time. He sold his business and concentrated his efforts on getting a commission as officer. But he was too old. He had had experience in the Riel Rebellion of Western Canada, back in 1885, and one day he met an old friend who had been with him in that campaign. They had a long talk after dinner one evening. I think he scented the situation, anyway, and he was a military man with influence. Dad finally was accepted and sent to take charge of a concentration camp of aliens. Mother had to stay behind, so at last Dad got a little peace.

The first shock was wearing off Mother by this time, and womanlike, I believe, she even enjoyed her rôle of martyred mother. She became active in recruiting meetings, and was one of a group of silly women who went around the streets or wherever men congregated, looking for cannon fodder and sticking white feathers on men who had tried to enlist and failed. I would hear her say to some woman or a group of them:

"I gave my two boys and I am ready to give my last one. I am glad they died for their country. We are patriotic. Our family is noted for serving its country."

The fall came round, and I was starting in second form in high school. I had found my first friend, Hartley McKenna, a splendid looking boy a year older than myself. Tall and fair, with quiet blue eyes in a well shaped head set on the slim, graceful body of an athlete. He never seemed to pay any attention to his studies, yet was always first. He was a philosopher in a way, with an increasing disregard for girls, who because of that, worshipped him. He was the school hero.

Hartley and I often talked of sneaking into the army, but never seriously until one day we attended Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition. We went to the evening performance before the grand stand. The searchlights, fireworks, massed bands, the tattoo, the Scarlet Riders, the huge number of people singing "God Save The King" and "O Canada" made me wish that I was a soldier and could die for my country, die gloriously, spectacularly, bravely, with the flag in my hand and my face to the foe. Then the end came, the lights all came on, and everybody began to move.

In the crowd ahead of us we heard a woman's shrill voice addressing some men.

"Why don't you enlist? You are young enough. Are you cowards? If you are, take this."

The crowd laughed, Hartley grinned at me, I grinned back. The crowd moved on. We gradually neared the group of women.

Before them the world became one huge eye.

"Here are two yellow shirkers! Why don't you enlist, you shirkers, hiding behind the other men. Shirkers, cowards, slackers!"

White feathers were stuck in our caps. I was dumbfounded, amazed. Were the women crazy? Somebody laughed, everybody laughed. All except one, a soldier. He pushed his way to us, and said:

"For God's sake, women, can't you see they are only kids? Are you crazy? They will try to enlist now. You are fools. Go home and look after your own kids, if you ever had guts to have any. Leave the boys alone."

He turned to us and said:

"Don't pay any attention to those old fools, kids; go home and for God's sake don't try to enlist. I have boys your age."

He pushed the women aside. The crowd was silent, till somebody shouted:

"That's the boy, soldier! If the women had to go they wouldn't be so damned anxious."

We passed through the entrance gate in silence, walked in silence, each looking at the other furtively to see how he had taken it. The soldier had saved our faces, or as we might have felt then, our souls, for there is nothing worse than to be accused of cowardice and be laughed at. Finally Hartley spoke:

"Well, Slim, it looks as if we can enlist after all. If that woman mistook us for men, I'll bet the army doctors would. Let us try anyway; at the very least we will get a rejected button."

I said—

"They will never take us, but sure, let's try anyway."

So we arranged it. We were to meet next morning and as school had not started we could go down in the morning and enlist. We shook hands on it and parted.

WE WERE up bright and early next morning. I met Hartley and we immediately set forth. We were both excited by this time at the prospect of enlisting. Hartley suggested that we might be taken on as buglers, but I objected. I wanted to go into the cavalry. They had nifty uniforms and horses to ride. Finally we arrived at the armories, and duly applied. We got as far as the doctor, but when we stripped for examination he only laughed, and said:

"Go home. You kids can't get in here."

So we dressed ourselves and departed despondently. Outside the armories we stopped to argue the question, when whom should we see but another fellow belonging to our school, in the complete outfit of a cavalryman. We hailed him excitedly and, as we knew him to be under the age limit, asked him at once how he got in. And in a very patronizing manner he told us. He had gone down and joined an out-of-town unit, the C.M.R's. He didn't have to strip, but underwent only a chest examination. It was easy, he said, and offered to show us the place.

So we went to a dirty little office near York Street, and there faced a fat, cold eyed doctor who only examined us in the chest and then passed us as fit. We signed the papers and were in the army. Just as easy as that; no trouble, no fuss, nothing. Hartley had given his age as twenty; I gave mine as nineteen. No questions were asked. We were simply told to report back next day to take the train to camp. And so we became soldiers of the King.

I am not going to bother giving all the details of how we sneaked away next day and took the train to Kingston, lost to our relatives and friends as completely as though the earth had swallowed us, nor describe the various further examinations. Suffice it to say that Barriefield Camp was located just outside of Kingston, a huge plain covered with tents and army equipment. There was a total army population of some ten thousand, divided into infantry, cavalry and artillery, with various machine gun and hospital corps units.

There were six men to each tent, and our group was a fair average of the types found in the army. Hartley was there, and myself. There was a man by the name of Coles, a cheerful ruffian with a mind like a sewer and a face pitted with blackheads.

Then there was the Methodist—very virtuous, soft spoken and sneaky, with all the outward appearance of a soldier and without the qualities of a fighter. He was held in general contempt, or in contempt on general grounds. He later got an orderly room job and stayed with it, never going to France. Then the Yank, a young man who had come from the States to enlist, a soulful young man, romantic and speaking like a girl. He was liked. Later he earned the V. C. honestly. Then there was Knight, the tallest man and the eldest, a South African veteran, with a voice like a bull, who held us, by sheer bluff, under his domination till we got to France. All of these men contributed their share to the making of that individual, Lionel Thor. Some for good, some for bad.

The weeks were filled with drills, inoculations, vaccinations and worry on Hartley's part about his relatives. I was never happier, full and overflowing with life. Then came the day when we applied for leave. It was granted.

I shall never forget our swaggering down to the train like hardened soldiers, flirting with the girls on the train, trying to act, speak and think like men. Then Toronto again, and Hartley began to lose his nerve about going home. So we took our first drink to give us courage. More swagger, more boasting, and then *home*.

It was the same old house. Nothing had changed, and as I walked up the long footpath, there slowly boiled and seethed all the things I had endured. I was fighting drunk. I opened the door with a bang. I knew where she would be, there in the sitting room, and she was, sitting in an easy chair, slumped out with a sort of lost look. She started when she saw me, but I gave her no chance to say anything.

"Well, here I am, in the army where you wanted me to be. Here is one more son for you to tell your cackling friends about. And if I am knocked out, you will know who did it. You can't blame it on Dad; oh, no, it isn't Dad's fault. It is yours, and every time you eat or go to bed, you won't have me to preach at. You are the only one left, so preach at yourself about your boys."

I noticed then that she was looking queerly at me, her mouth open, her eyes staring. I was held for a moment by some power, and then I cried, went down on my knees, chafing her hands and crying:

"Mother, I'm sorry. Oh, Mother, I'm sorry; don't look like that, Mother."

The hour that I had dreamed about turned to ashes in my mouth. Presently she seemed to come to herself, and began to fondle me, kiss me and babble about what a fool she had been, the torture she had undergone at not hearing from me, and how sorry she had been.

After a time we had supper and, not wanting to stay there, I suggested the theater. On the way, we met a friend of Mother's, one who went with her on the white feather expeditions. I will never forget it. She came up smirking and said:

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. Thor? And who is this gallant young man off to fight for King and country?"

Mother gave one look and said:

"This is my third and last son. Damn king and country!" And on the way home she said in a voice that did not sound a bit like her old one, "Well, I have certainly made a mess of things. I have made your life and Dad's a hell. But from now on I intend—" She said no more. And what could I say?

I met Hartley next day, and he and his parents had argued far into the night. We were off for the world's greatest war at the ages of seventeen and eighteen. The babes in the wood were nothing to us. Mother was at the station when we left, as were several other relatives. Her face was pale and grim, but her eyes were shining. She kissed my hand instead of my mouth. I felt foolish. On the train I remembered Mrs. Braithwaite. I had forgotten her altogether!

CHAPTER II

CAMPS

ONE OF the curses of modern war is the fact that a citizen must merge, or is supposed to merge his own individuality with that of his army unit. It is the battalions that have personalities, not the men. The man of spirit naturally resents this and strives in a sort of blind rage to realize and assert his individuality, sometimes adopting very queer methods. At Barriefield Camp we became numbers. We were no longer known by name. I was 51934. I resented being ordered around like a horse; I rebelled at standing in line for meals, and because of this I became a mark for N. C. O's and officers, and was considered, in company with Hartley, as hardboiled.

We were more often before the commanding officer than not. He was just as determined to break us into patient truck horses as we were not to be broken. Curiously our companion in revolt was the Yank. He too resented authority. We grew hard inwardly, took to drink, and while in our cups found expression.

The hardening process continued and day by day I was becoming what was commonly called a tough soldier.

To keep the city of Kingston in a normal state despite the presence of the soldiers, each outfit had to take its turn in supplying pickets, whose business it was to look after the soldiers on leave to town at night, and also to keep order. The pickets marched in patrols up and down streets, picking up drunks or breaking up any rowdyism. One night it came to the turn of our section, and I, with the Yank, four others and a corporal, was selected. We marched regularly up and down the main thoroughfare until twelve o'clock and were just on the way home when a huge crowd in front of the opera house attacted our attention.

The corporal immediately marched us to the scene and we felt sure it was some row between soldiers and civilians. Pushing our way through the crowd, we came on one of the most curious scenes of my life. A huge soldier of an infantry battalion was standing with one of the signs of the theater in his hands, and he was swinging it in the air, threatening all and sundry to come and get him. On the ground beside him lay the body of another soldier, held down by his foot. He was wildly drunk, fighting drunk, six foot four inches of huge, gorilla shaped body, slobbering at the mouth, his face reminding me of a bulldog. The crowd, composed of both soldiers and civilians, stood gaping as the corporal detailed the Yank and myself to arrest him.

We had no arms or equipment except a belt and bayonet issued especially for the occasion, which we were not allowed to use except at the command of an officer, but we went forward, ignorant as we were of the vagaries of the drunk's nature, and tried to speak to him. He looked at us with stupid, gaping, bloodshot eyes, a horrible sight, like some great moloch, and in a flash he picked me up bodily and threw me into the crowd. The people I fell on were more hurt than I, however. The Yank followed me through the air, and the crowd laughed.

That jeering laughter raised a fury within me. The dirty beast could manhandle me like that, could he? I was back and at him, the bayonet in my hand, held by the blade—and a Ross bayonet is heavy. He swayed before me, waiting, his paws up ready. I knew he was watching and that if I was caught in those prehensile hands I was done for. So I waited for him to attack, baiting him, calling him all manner of names.

He rushed. I jumped aside. The bayonet rose and fell, as I struck and struck. Then I was on his back and he was down. It took the rest of the picket to pull me off and we took him away, I snarling and hitting at the civilians—

anybody in my path—like an angry dog. We didn't like civilians to see army men like this, but even with his head bashed in, it took all of us to hold him.

We took him back to camp, and pegged him to the ground spread-eagle fashion. It was a rainy night and cold, and with each limb pegged he couldn't move, only moan like a whipped cur. He lay there all night in the mud and rain and was sober in the morning, a pitiful wreck of a man.

WE HAD one more short leave home that fall. Then we were off to England. We arrived just before Christmas, in England, the place of our dreams. The story of our home in England had been passed down from generation to generation, and the story of our ancestors' exile during one of the religious wars of the Middle Ages, so that in each one of us had been planted a picture of our ancestral home.

England. Toy houses, toy people, toy towns. Everything in miniature.

We were duly installed at Bramshott Camp near Liphook and Haslemere, and immediately after our arrival we were given six days' leave. Hartley, the Yank and myself naturally selected London for our conquest. Out of Canada and away from home, we felt secure in the fact that we could act like men.

Yet we entertained ourselves childishly. Theaters, food; theaters, food. We kept away from the women at first, not because of lack of interest, but through Hartley's gentle guidance.

One night the Yank and I met two girls somewhere near Charing Cross and when they spoke to us we halted. I was filled more with the spirit of adventure than anything else. It was a triumph. At last we would be able to contribute our stories. The Yank went on with his woman and soon disappeared in the crowd, while I dropped behind with the smaller and fairer of the two, a sweet, quiet, pale faced girl with a slight figure. She was fairly well educated too, with a beautiful voice, wistful and pathetic.

Her voice was soothing and I forgot my objective and suggested supper, mentioning a restaurant that every Canuck knew. She peered up at me and said—"Did you say the Ritz, Canada?"

I said—

"Yes, why not?"

Again she peered at me. My heavens, I was innocent. I urged her till she gave a rather queer laugh and agreed. In the restaurant we talked of everything except sex. I gave my impressions of England and of how everybody seemed to make a point of overcharging us. I was a good talker, she a splendid listener, and I made her laugh several times. We both enjoyed ourselves and after supper we went to the theater, then for a walk along the Thames where it was beautifully quiet and restful.

After awhile we had some more supper in a quiet little tea shop, and my nervousness began. We became rather strained and I felt like some one who, dining with a chap whom he finds rather delightful and human, suddenly discovers that it is his janitor. I became furtive, and she sat watching me with a queer speculative light in her eyes.

"Well, Canada," she said at last, "it's my turn now. This is your first experience with people like me, isn't it?"

I nodded dazedly again.

"Well, let it be your last. You know I almost forgot there were lads like you. I am going to quit this business and go home, home to my mother up in Somerset. You never heard of Somerset, did you? Now go away and leave people like me alone."

I stood like the gawky, bewildered fool I was. There was a dead silence, just her hand moving, I standing there.

Then without volition slowly I rose to go. Just as I reached the door, she suddenly leaped up, caught me, took my hand and put it to her cheek very gently, and then pushed me through the door and closed it.

A salute to a real woman, girl, wherever you are, in green Somerset or yet in the London dark, worn faced and hard now, or in some still and soon forgotten grave. You live and are real for me forever, just because I know now what might have been and what could not be.

DAYS and days of incessant drills, until one day came a startling surprise. In France the Canadian Mounted Rifles had been made into infantry, and automatically we became the same. The various squadrons were joined until they made one complete brigade of infantry in the new 3rd Division and were known as the 8th Brigade, 3rd Division Canadians. There were four battalions, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th. One battalion from each part of Canada.

We became a draft depot to replace casualties in the newly formed brigade.

When the orders were definitely announced and infantry equipment began to be issued, we held indignation meetings, delegations went to the O.C. and begged for transfers to real cavalry. With tears in his eyes, he explained that he was doing all in his power, and one day we were on parade when he addressed us, speaking feelingly, emotionally of his hopes. How he had grown to love us, harum-scarum lot that we were. That he was sure we were going to be great soldiers, and that on that very day when he knew he could not take us as a unit to France he had offered his resignation and volunteered to go as a private. We cheered. We had grown to love him too, the old walrus-mustached, lined faced man.

He told us the famous story of the Messines Barricade, when through no fault of their own, they (that is, the new brigade in France) had been put in the line without proper training, without guides, and of how Fritz had taken advantage of it; and now, he said, our nickname among the infantry was not the C.M.R's but the C.M. Runs. He begged us then to retrieve our name and make it one of honor and not of disgrace. Let it signify that we were running toward the enemy and not from them.

And there and then, like knights of old, we took the vow that in later days made the C.M.R's the shock troops of a shock corps; the vow, whose fulfilment cost more casualties than in any other brigade in the Allied or German armies, and that won more battles, that helped to make the battle of Courcelette in 1916 a byword; that made Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele and later fights something to remind the world of the Canadians. That was our vow.

That night we held the famous burial parade, when we buried our spurs, and the hopes of the Canadian Mounted Rifles by torchlight and according to the Rites of the Church of England. A burlesque, you say? Maybe. Burlesque is sometimes only a transparent garment for tragedy.

Infantry drill, rifle and bayonet exercises, squad drill, open order. Never did instructors have more unwilling pupils. They lashed us, goaded us, but we were sullen, and the instructors grew afraid of going out at night. Bayonet exercise is one of the most bloodthirsty pursuits you could wish. We were lined up in front of sacks of straw suspended from a gibbet, with various vulnerable parts of the human body marked on the sack, and our job was to lunge, stab and kick at this arrangement, to the continual din of the instructor's voice saying:

"Now put some ginger into hit. Hin! Hout! Hon guard! Ow! Ow! And they call this houtfit Canidnans! You couldn't be hannything else. Stick 'im, kick 'im. Ow! Ow! Thank Gord we got a nivy!"

Then if the instructor got too close, somebody accidentally would drop the butt of the rifle on his toes. Such was our prelude.

Rumors had been flying for days that we would soon be going to France. Our training was hardening, toughening us for the slaughter. We were in perfect health and filled with the joy of life. It had to find outlet and it did, in joyous rags, fights in pubs, walking ourselves tired up and down the streets of Haslemere and Liphook looking for girls, and in a thousand other ways.

One wonderful day I remember. It was spring, and in spring England is wonderful. The air was soft and balmy, a caress; the birds were singing; and we had been given the day off. The Yank and I went away off the beaten track and just lazily walked and drifted with the breeze, letting it lead us down the hills, over the railroad tracks, over the next hill, along a lane lined with oaks of wondrous beauty and quaint little thatched cottages, to a tiny little village.

It was mid-afternoon and we lazily sat beside a tree to watch, as the Yank said, "the crowd roll by". Not a soul could be seen. I believe I went to sleep, dreaming of England, the real England which I had found at last. And out of the mist of dreams, I woke to see a fairy godmother, plump, with fluted cap. We sat watching her making her way toward us. And behold! She came, nodding and smiling to us. A smile that crinkled every dimple and wrinkle in her dear old face, and made us grin in return and shuffle to our feet, hats in hand. I can't reproduce her dialect, but she invited us to tea.

Would we? We would, and so up the lane, one on each side, we went, towering over her, then through a funny little gate into a prim little garden, with flowers already blooming, and into the house, wherein everything was shining, everything spotless. And to complete the picture there was an old, old man, toothless, who kept mumbling away to us or himself, we never knew which, and what did it matter? A cat was purring, a clock ticking, the kettle singing merrily, in peace. I had found a little of the real England.

Back to camp in a haze of romance, dreams of cats, clocks, children, wives, sunsets, cradles, all joyfully intermixed. A happy day.

One day my name, Hartley's and the Yank's were read out for a draft to France. The farewell from the other members of the depot reminded one of a wedding. Slaps on the back, boisterous talk, about our luck and giving the Germans one for them.

CHAPTER III

YPRES

IT WAS a dark, drizzly day when we arrived at Le Havre. We had a long march up to the Canadian Base Depot, uphill all the way. Our greeting from France was the cries of children for souvenirs and bully beef. They were wise in the ways of the infantry, these children. They knew that after the first few kilometers, when the equipment became heavy, the men would suddenly get generous.

The camp at Le Havre was set on a hill, and it was there that we met a new kind of Canadian. Canadians who had curiously set expressions and who were continually chuckling at some joke apparently on themselves. There was a disregard for petty things. And Ypres! Morning, noon and night, the name assumed the spectral proportions of a nightmare. Ypres! It grew and grew before us, until it became like the giant in the story of "Jack the Giant Killer".

Then on the second day we were addressed by the Padre: a man seemingly kept there for the express purpose of exhorting troops going up the line. His sermon began by his saying, "Kill the Huns" and ended with "Kill the Huns." The Christianity of churches is a flexible thing. In peace time pacifist, in war time it becomes a composition of stoicism and *laissez-faire* resulting in a slaughterhouse ethic.

We were issued new equipment of British manufacture, called the Webb equipment, a canvas affair of many intricate pieces but more comfortable than its Canadian counterpart; and gas masks—not the later style, but just a chemical hood to put over our heads—ammunition field dressing, to be sewn in our tunics, and identity disks, which latter made us shiver. There were two of them and I asked an old soldier—

"Why two?"

He laughed and said—

"Well, if your head goes, they have your wrist, and if both go, they don't give a darn what happens then anyway."

And that was that. I didn't question him further.

We were inoculated again for something or other, and then, as we were badly needed, we went on our way again to the Front, in box cars appropriately labeled as containing so many horses and men.

We passed through a peaceful country, a beautiful country, that reminded me of Ontario, and as one wag remarked, the French even had cows like ours. The time of the train ride was filled in with poker and crown-and-anchor and a new game we had picked up called "housie-housie".

During a stop in the second day of our train ride, a funny sound came to our ears. A relentless monotone like the playing of some huge organ with bass notes only. It rose and fell, rose and fell. We looked at each other questioningly. What was it? Then from the car ahead came a man whom we knew as an old soldier, going back to his unit. We asked him what it was. His chuckle was sardonic.

"You'll know soon enough what it is—that's the guns."

The guns! My stomach suddenly rose up to throttle me; my body grew dry and brittle. The guns! There was silence for a moment, then talk, boisterous talk. Hectic talk about nothing, sudden enthusiasm to look in the darkest corners of the car. We arrived at Poperinghe that afternoon.

Poperinghe was situated several kilometers behind the lines, yet still within shelling distance. It was the end of steel. Outside of the town were situated several rest camps, or groups of huts for troops when they were out of the line. They were also billeted in the town itself, as about half of the inhabitants had left.

The troops had established their own canteens, moving pictures and such-like. The town was always crowded with ambulances, motor wagons, limbers, etc, and traffic policemen were a necessity. One of the standing jokes among the infantry was, "Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?" the answer being, "I directed it." This was usually shouted in passing these police, who were looked down upon as "bombproofers." Possibly it was envy.

We detrained at the station, or rather just outside what had been the station, and stood there like sheep caught in a storm, until a sergeant put in his appearance accompanied by an officer. In England we would have said that it was an officer accompanied by a sergeant, but a little experience in France gave us the true perspective, for in our army the officer was only the mouthpiece of the sergeant; he knew nothing and the sergeant knew everything, or, at least sometimes, too much.

Some other N.C.O's also hove in sight and bore down on us, and the officer stopped and asked—

"Where are you men detailed to?"

We didn't know. We looked blank, the officer looked blank, and the sergeant harangued us on the life, the army, the officers, and base camps. Then a transport officer came down. Now transport officers have been dealing with sergeants for a long time, and have learned the axiom that the best method of defense is attack. This one began:

"Here, Sergeant. Why haven't you got these men away? Do you know they haven't had a meal yet? Get a move on. You blinkin' infantrymen think you have eternity to move in."

To which the sergeant replied—

"Say, go easy. We don't know whether this is our mob or not; we haven't any papers and neither have they."

We were grinning, the officer was grinning, and somebody behind said—

"I bet two bits on the transport officer."

The latter knew his business all right, and began to shout:

"Papers? Papers? Why, if he was going in the line and Fritz was coming over he would ask for papers—papers!"

The sergeant looked sullen while the officer looked away quickly and some one else giggled. The transport officer looked through a fistful of papers and said:

"Here you are, Sergeant. Here are your papers, your nice little printed papers; but don't forget the men." He passed on majestically.

The sergeant looked at us grimly.

"Fall in, in two ranks." We shuffled into position. There were four box-cars full of us to go to this one unit. "Do you know how to form fours?"

Somebody said we did.

"A mistake must have happened, they know how to form fours. The last mob we got didn't even know where to put their rifles. Well, form it! Now right turn and follow me."

Hartley looked at me and said:

"So this is war. Well, I'm damned! Why, that guy doesn't even know how to give the proper commands."

But I remonstrated and said:

"Have a heart, Hartley. You didn't know anything about infantry drill yourself until we were made footsloggers. Why, I'll bet that beggar never let on he saw infantrymen before."

For let the truth be known: the C.M.R's never liked to admit that they were infantry and they wouldn't do infantry drill if they could possibly avoid it. Officer, N.C.O. and private felt the same way. So off we went, following our leader by devious ways until we arrived at a collection of huts outside the town, between Poperinghe and Vlamertinghe. We halted before one and the sergeant and officer disappeared, coming into view again with several more officers and the colonel.

They looked us over. Then a short, stout sergeant-major stepped out, asked for volunteers for the battalion machine gun section and concluded by saying—

"Of course you get better grub in the M.G.S."

As one man, Hartley, myself and the Yank stepped forward with three or four others. The sergeant-major smiled and turned to the commanding officer, saying—

"Depend on the young ones to come when you say grub."

They all laughed. The sergeant-major separated the volunteers for better grub away from the others, called a corporal and away we went again, finally coming to rest before another hut. The corporal disappeared within, and out came the funniest, shortest, stoutest officer I had ever seen. He wore glasses and had the complexion of a baby just spanked, but had a curiously deep voice. He looked at us, we looked at him, and he had a very companionable smile. He looked at the Yank, short, demure, angelic. At Hartley, tall, sober, funereal. At myself, awkward, gawky, looking my real age.

"My God, what is Canada coming to? Are these soldiers?" Then he grinned, with ourselves and the corporal following suit. "Tell 'em to leave their equipment here, Corporal, and take 'em away, wipe their noses, wash their faces, feed 'em, and assign them to their guns. We will find them beds afterwards."

We gratefully dropped our equipment, and were led by our guide, philosopher and friend, the corporal, to an army field kitchen, where a most ruffianly looking cook was playing poker with a group of others beside the wagon. He had one eye, a face almost black with too much shaving, eyebrows that looked almost like misplaced mustaches, and wore a greasy black shirt. He was absorbed in the game when we came on the scene. The corporal hailed him:

"Hey, you gotta give these guys some grub, and don't take all their money away from them. I want some myself."

It is a heart breaking thing to hear a man with huge proportions, and black, evil visage, speak, sometimes, for you are disappointed. We were, in this case. We expected curses at the army, corporal, etc, in a deep bass voice, and nearly fell over when we heard the cook speak. It sounded like a contralto, a peculiarly sweet, womanish voice accompanied by a smile of welcome that entranced us.

"Well, well, well, boys! Just a minute and I will give you the feed of a lifetime."

Away he went and in a trice we had a dish of stew, Spanish onions, bread, butter, jam and cheese and tea. It was wonderful. Two days on hardtack and water hadn't killed our appetites, and the cook looked on in pride as we did full justice to his artistry.

AFTER this feast the corporal once more appeared and led us back to our equipment and then allotted us to our guns. Hartley, the Yank and myself were left to the last and came to a halt outside a hut that was even more dilapidated than the rest. There the corporal shouted:

"Sam, Sam! Where in hell are you?"

Holding his shirt in one hand and his trousers up with the other, naked to the waist yet somehow still looking personable, there appeared at the door of the hut some one who looked down indolently, insolently at us and, eyeing us humorously, said:

"My God save Canada. What is she doing? Calling up the class of 1905?" The corporal laughed and we looked sheepish. The corporal finally said:

"Where's Sam? You ought to consider yourself damn' lucky to get these; you should 'a' seen the rest."

The figure spoke again:

"My gun's full anyhow. Sam's gone to town to see a man about a dog—" a wink —"so I'll take 'em in. Come in, you guys, and make yourself at home." We did.

Then came questions; the poor fellow was alone and had to take questions from all of us. Was that a Fritz airplane up above? Were we really going to be machine-gunners? When did we go in the line? Was he killing lice? Were there many of them? And so on *ad infinitum*, until at last he cried for a halt and said he wanted some beer, and as we were just out we must have some money. We had, and we were only too glad to have the honor of buying beer for a real fighting soldier, even if he didn't exhibit any extravagant knight errantry.

Then we had some forbidden cognac and talked far into the night. We found that we were in D Company, machine gun squad, and that Sam was our No. 1 in charge of the gun. We were merely carriers. In machine guns of the Colt and Vickers type there are six men to each crew: No. 1, who is in charge and actually does the firing; No. 2, who assists No. 1 in loading and making repairs; and No. 3, who takes charge of spare parts. The other three carry ammunition and are spare men, moving up one when casualties occur, until No. 6 is No. 1. And if No. 6 gets it, the gun is out of action, but not till then, unless certain stoppages occur. In case of attack a machine gun crew *never falls back*.

In an offensive war their task is more or less easy. In defense they are a suicide club, actually and in theory. As three casualties had occurred on this gun we were replacements and had yet to be trained. We had had no previous experience whatsoever with machine guns, in fact had only fired ten rounds out of rifles at the ranges. Our No. 1 told us that we had better get a lot of sleep, as we were due to go in the line the next night, June the first. It was to be our last trip into Ypres town, so he said, as we were to go and open a big offensive on the Germans somewhere. But we never opened that offensive, which was later known as the battle of the Somme.

The next morning we awoke covered with lice and filled with cheerfulness. My body was one itching, crawling mass, and felt loathsome to me. Even Hartley, the acme of cleanliness, had them. We told our No. 1 about it, but he only grinned and said:

"If you only knew it, you will find the cooties are your best friends. I was going through for a chemist once and they told us about a thing called a 'counter-irritant' and that is just what you will find them to be."

After trying in vain to rid ourselves of them, we began to compare experiences and found that we were unanimous in our decision that, so far, France was better than England or Canada as far as the army went. No drills, no worry about saluting or dirty buttons or anything like that, but peace, relaxation, while everybody, even the adjutant, seemingly had forgotten all about petty things. We had even grown used to that *boom-boom-boom*, ahead of us. Although we were just a few miles behind the line there was no shelling and our No. 1 told us that they had special arrangements with Fritz not to shell each other's rest camps. The funny part of it was that I never heard of troops on rest getting shelled or bombed until 1917, so it was almost credible.

There was a restful relaxation about that camp that amazed us. We found ourselves quite happy and at peace with the world. Everybody was so considerate. The presence of death, not too near, is a great tonic to men's higher perceptions.

That night, or rather at dusk, we fell in, to march off to war. The band played, the colonel reviewed us, we marched shoulder to shoulder, chins up, chests out, with a swing as if being reviewed by the king. Eleven hundred human beings, all somebody's sons, somebody's sweethearts, somebody's husband or friend. Shoulder to shoulder we marched.

O Canada, O Canada.

Only two hundred and sixty-five answered the roll call when we came out. Jerry and Tom and James and Ronald never answered the roll. The colonel wasn't there . . . Two hundred and sixty-five.

AT DUSK we started on the trek to the lines, in company columns, at long intervals. Each company was to take a different route after reaching Ypres, so that this was the last time we would be seen as a unit, until we came out of the line again.

The machine gun squad was last, and they were to pick up their guns and ammunition at the village of Zillebecke, where the limbers would leave them. Our turn to move had come at last. We had been sitting on the ground, resting and smoking after the review, when word came. A heave and a grunt and we were off, to the accompaniment of sardonic farewells from odd soldiers who were watching us leave, such as "Goodby, good luck, a soldier's farewell to you"; "Don't let Fritzie bite you"; and the unforgivable insult to a C.M.R: "Don't run so fast next time." Then the marching songs. "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile." A mouth organ started to play. Hats were thrust back on our heads; it was getting warm.

Darkness was falling, and the first flare streaked the horizon, to the accompaniment of:

"There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams
Where the ni-ightin-gales are sing-ing,
And the *white* mo-on beams.
There's a long, long trail a-winding . . ."

Darkness had settled; flares threw a greenish, ghastly color over the land. The guns boomed slowly at intervals, like a minute gun at a funeral.

"I want to go home, I want to go home,
I don't want to go to the Front any more.
The whizzbangs they whistle,
The cannon they roar.
Take me over the sea,
Where the Allemand can't get me.
Oh, my, I'm too young to die.
I want to go home."

The singing died down, the mouth organ stopped, heads fell forward. *Plod-plod-plod-clump-clump-clump-clump* . . .

At last, rest. A heave to the side, a hurried search, away goes gun, bag, ammunition, water bottles, and other paraphernalia. Ah, now the strap is loosened a little. Now that should be just right. But would it? Too little is better than too much load. A still more hurried search in my pack, and away went socks, knitted doo-dads from home, part of my ammunition. Then a sigh of content, a smoke, peace, relaxation.

I looked around. It was the road to Ypres. The flares cast a horrible light over everything, making the country a ghastly green phantasmagoria. Trees were broken and gaunt, and looked almost beseeching, stretching out arms to stop us, as if saying, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." Everybody was whispering; no one was laughing, just whispering. The Yank leaned over and said—

"Slim, I'm scared stiff for fear I show yellow."

I didn't understand what he meant then. I had been so taken up with my shoulder, I had forgotten about fear. Shouts came to us—

"Fall in, fall in."

Heaves, curses, grunts, the creak of equipment. The smell of sweat, and off again.

The sound of marching feet in front changed tune. Feet rang more sharply. I looked up. Ypres. I never thought houses had souls till I saw Ypres. Row on row of empty shells, that looked and felt dead. Staring out on the world with a sightless, fixed gaze that appalled one. My head dropped again. *Plod-plod-plod;* not a sound could be heard except the ringing of iron shod feet on the cobbles. I sniffed and sniffed again. What in heaven's name had such a vile smell?

It grew worse, the Yank began to vomit, and it didn't take a second for me to follow suit. I heard Hartley behind curse, the first time I ever heard him swear. Somebody laughed; the corporal came back.

"What's the matter with you guys? Oh, I see. All right, fall in as soon as you can. Hard luck. I did the same myself the first time. What is it, did you say? Well, to put it gently, it is dead horses—and others. Mostly others. Get back into line. We're behind time now."

Plod-plod-plod through the square, where the city of the dead came to life. For here was traffic, traffic reminding you of Piccadilly circus, only there were no lights. Ambulances, limbers, wagons, troops, traffic policemen, cursing and shouting; it brought us back to life and reality for a minute—the Cloth Hall, the cavalry barracks, infantry barracks. Down the road, and then the Menin Gate.

When I was a boy I often read the books of Henty, and one of his favorite phrases was "baptism of fire" and I appropriate that same phrase for my own use. There is not a better and more literal description of the Menin Gate than that. It was a baptismal font for thousands of Canadians, because outside that gate was war.

IT WAS early, eleven P.M. when our squad arrived at the gate. The huge towering ramparts loomed above us, and gave shelter from what might be happening outside. Not only that, but we could smoke and talk once more. The various N.C.O's were as busy as clucking hens mustering their charges. We were to go through the gate and over the bridge in small sections running as hard as we could, then to fall into a ditch at the other side. Our section was last, so that we had all the form necessary to make it a ceremony.

The long anxious wait, the corporal approaching, chanting, and exhorting us, then the final sudden dart to safety. That long, long wait, that curious sickening feeling rising again from my stomach. It rose and rose till I was sure it was going to choke me. I wasn't afraid; it was something separate from myself, over which I had no control. It rose slowly, inevitably, mercilessly. My God, it wasn't me. Was I showing fear? I looked around furtively, tried deliberately to laugh and joke with Hartley. My laugh sounded like the gobble of a turkey.

"Get ready fellows and don't forget to get in that ditch and stay there. Keep your heads down too. Now!"

A breathless scurrying dive through a huge invisible foundry of ringing anvils, with shrieks from the shells rising like the wail of lost souls. The corporal or somebody had guessed wrong, we were in it, and not past it as we should have been. Smoke, gasps, curses that were prayers. Free air at last, a dive into a ditch on top of others, with heavy boots striking them. More curses, curses, curses. A gasp of relief. I was *safe*. Fall in, fall in, single file.

"Put out that cigaret, keep touch with the man in front. Keep moving, keep touch, close up, close up." *Plod-plod-plod* —heads down. My shoulder hurt again. Then the man in front laughed, a queer laugh, as if the joke was on him.

"God, I was hit and didn't know it. O God, I'm hit! My guts." Then he drops and I almost fall over him. He is panting like a dog I saw poisoned once. "Stretcher bearers on the double. Keep up, don't lose touch. Close up, close up. Never mind him. Stretcher bearers, stretcher bearers, close up; close up!" *Plod-plod-plod.* "Wire overhead! Wire overhead, shell hole to the right! Watch your step!" Smell, smell; the sickening paralyzing odor of decaying bodies. Past the Zillebecke dugouts, Zillebecke Lake, then the village, and a halt where you drop on the ground dead tired, sick of the world, sick of yourself, praying for death.

The corporal goads us into life again. We struggle through the darkness over piles of sacks and equipment, until we find our gun, left there by the transports. Ammunition boxes, belt boxes, spare parts, tripod, the gun itself and rations all accounted for, we are off again in single file, just one small group of six men, tired, stumbling through holes, wire, underbrush, pitch darkness. At last the corporal in front shouts:

"Is that the 60th? Where the hell is your No. 1 gun? Just like you guys to hide the damned thing off somewhere."

Another voice answers, a voice filled with relief:

"Thank God, you blighters did arrive at last. We thought you had got lost."

Stumble, stumble, dark forms flitting here and there, talk between the corporals about ranges, ammunition and so on. And then quiet again. Off come our packs, our gun is thrown down, and sitting in a hole we are able to smoke again. We have carried out a relief.

It is the morning of June 2, 1916.

CHAPTER IV

BAPTISM OF FIRE

THE CORPORAL immediately proceeded to break us in to the French etiquette and cooking.

With pieces of sandbag, candles and an empty tin, one can boil tea very rapidly and without smoke, also fry bacon or do any other cooking that is necessary. No. 2 and the Yank were detailed to take the first watch with the gun. The gun was mounted in an exposed position with only a waterproof over it, and thus would be used only in case of attack.

Half of the brigade of C.M.R's were in the front line, on a slight ridge called Mount Sorrell, and the other half acted as a support and were entrenched in Sanctuary and Armagh Woods. There were only two lines of defense, the front line, and supports in the woods, with one eighteen-pound gun called a "sacrifice gun" also hidden in the woods, directly behind the front line. The nearest supports to us would be or were supposed to be, at the railroad dugouts in Zillebecke. But as the artillery were pulling out of the line that night, it would be doubtful if there would be anything behind us except working parties until one came to the rest camps near Poperinghe.

The range in case of attack was three hundred and fifty yards, which meant that we were within three hundred yards of the Germans. Mount Sorrell rose in the darkness ahead of us, silhouetted by flares. All we could see was a pile of new earth here and there. Not a soul could be seen. We slept in the daytime, all work being done at night in the salient.

The corporal explained all this to us, as we sat in a small shelter made of arched corrugated iron that gave us room neither to sit up straight nor to lie down. It was about five feet square and three high in the center. And it was in this drain that we had to sleep, eat and do our work. We were not allowed to expose ourselves in the daytime. The corporal had dug a hole for himself close to the gun and in this the day relief sat and smoked.

The corporal was telling me of his first trip in the line at the famous or infamous Messines barricade, when he suddenly stopped to listen. For the last hour or so he had appeared nervous, and we couldn't quite understand why, as the first line seemed to be quite peaceful and not a solitary gun of any description was being fired. Finally I asked:

"What's the matter, Corp? Do you hear something?"

He grinned and said:

"That is just the trouble—I can't. This line is too darn' quiet to suit me. I have never seen it like this before." He snuffed out the candle. "I am beginning to get a hunch that Fritz is brewing some grief for us."

He crawled outside, and the other old member, a man by the name of Hurde, joined him. Hartley and I grinned at each other. War wasn't so bad after all. We had visualized a continual rain of bullets and bombs while in the line, and here there wasn't a shell or gun to be heard. I said:

"Say, Hartley, you can never satisfy some guys. If there were shells they would kick, and when there aren't, they're kicking."

Hartley laughed as he answered:

"It does seem funny. It is darn' quiet though, isn't it?"

Suddenly we heard the voice of the officer outside calling for the corporal, and the corporal answering him, as he came over. They stood just outside our hole. The officer spoke first.

"It seems very quiet, doesn't it, Spence? I wonder what the devil he has got up his sleeve? It must be pretty bad. I hear the brigadiers are coming in the line to look it over. I hope nothing happens this trip. It may be our last in the salient from what I hear. The Front is getting the wind up, though. Look at the damn' flares we are throwing up. The line's getting nervous."

Then the corporal's voice:

"I'm getting jumpy myself, sir. They do seem nervous over by the gap. I have never seen our guys more generous with flares."

"Well, don't forget your standing orders. If anything happens, you are to head for the ridge if they need help, as soon as you can, or if you see the artillery flare, you move up. The other three guns of D Company will be in the woods, so don't forget to send a runner to them, if they are firing too low. Well, good luck, Corporal. Have a drink? Well, so long, and don't forget to move up if anything happens—and I have a hunch—" The earth deadened voice went away.

"Goodby, sir, good luck." The corporal crawled in again. "You guys had better come out of here and stand to. I am afraid we are in for grief."

We crawled out again with him. It was a beautiful morning, the sky carpeted with stars, and the wind had changed, so that Fritz was getting the smell. The air felt soft and dampish and it was dark.

I chuckled softly as I crawled out, imitating an Englishman as I remarked—

"'Oo wouldn't be a blinkin' worm?"

Hartley laughed, and even the corporal gave a chuckle. He then detailed us off to our work, and there we stood and waited, for we knew not what. Dawn came slowly, making us look like wraiths. I shivered with the cold, or what I thought was cold. I had four belt boxes in sandbags to carry. Hartley was about ten feet in front, sitting down hugging the spare parts. I could just dimly discern the machine gun, with the corporal sitting behind it, and what I supposed to be the Yank and the other man lying by it. Hurde was behind me. He had discovered he hadn't got a field dressing and was softly cursing. I felt for mine.

"Gosh, isn't it funny," I thought to myself, "waiting to be hit and killed?" I prayed I wouldn't get it in the face. I wouldn't like that. Darn funny. How quiet it was; a cough sounded like a burst of a bomb. I kept giggling to myself. Was I getting hysterical? I must stop that. Gee, it was quiet.

THEN a huge burst of flame, a hundred feet high, that gave enough light, for the fraction of a second, to light the whole salient. Then an ear-splitting, deadening, paralyzing boom. Again it happened. Again, and again. Seven times. By the second time my hearing had gone. I could hear nothing, in a world on fire. Loose dirt came down on our helmets like heavy rain. Then flares of all colors and kinds went up in the air. The artillery broke loose. Fritzie's—the whole horizon was lighted by stabbing flames of light. For seconds I watched in fascinated wonder until I saw a man beside the gun leap into the air and fall flat. I was suddenly paralyzed. The world was coming to an end. My ear drums were vibrating like a telegraph key.

Hurde came from behind, pushing me aside to fall beside the gun. I stared around. A cyclone without wind was taking place, trees crashing, smoke rising in sudden bursts of earth, and other things flung suddenly into the air, only to disappear. Although it was not yet daylight, the whole scene was brilliantly lighted by exploding shells and flares. I looked toward the hill in front. My God, it was gone! And another hill was there, of new earth with little bits of smoke rising from it here and there. It was nearer to us now. Then smoke came in one huge gasping cloud and stopped all further vision.

I couldn't even see the gun. I heard nothing. My eyes watered, tears in a stream rolled down my face. Burnt powder and cordite filled my mouth with alum. I stood there like a gawking schoolboy, choked, blinded, deaf. What had happened?

The battle of Sanctuary Woods had begun.

I staggered blindly forward, the iron belt boxes striking against my body at every step. Out of the smoke loomed a little mound, the gun. I found Hartley. He had a wound in the arm, near the elbow. The corporal was safe, untouched, but the other two were dead. Hurde had received a nose cap in the middle of the face. It was ghastly. The corporal saw me fixing Hartley's arm and came over. I was worried about the latter; he was trying to tell me something, but I couldn't hear him. Oh; artery, that was what he was saying. I tied it up, but couldn't make the darn thing fit properly. Blood bathed my hands, his blood, and my hands grew slippery.

The corporal pushed me aside, and fitted the bandage himself, quickly, expertly. He had had experience. He sat down then, fished out a paper and pencil, wrote a short note and gave it to Hartley, shouting in his ear. Hartley staggered to his feet, lurched like one drunk, and left.

The corporal, in taking the gun down, signed to the Yank and me. He took the tripod and two sandbags with belt boxes in, and I took the gun itself. The Yank took the leather case of spare parts and more belt boxes. A staggering, sobbing, cursing half walk, half run, trying to keep in sight of the corporal, down holes, up holes, holes, holes, holes. Smoke, flares of flame. An inferno. Over broken trees, with dim figures meeting us, staggering past us, going out. Usually the white spots of bandages showed up glaringly. Our fourth man must have been buried.

I wondered if the brigadiers had been killed. Sob, with breath whistling, heart hammering, lungs pounding for clean air.

A hill now. Climb, climb, you poor blasted infantry, climb. The air is getting fresher; at last the top. The corporal is sitting, head down between legs, wracked with sobs, trying to regain his breath. I fall beside him, my breath coming in short stabbing gasps, my head falling forward. The Yank falls beside me, face downward, and I watch his body jerking spasmodically. At last back to normal. The corporal taps me, and motions toward the gun. We get it mounted, and a belt box in place. He looks worried and gazes at the wood with a puzzled air. The landscape looks so changed, he can't get his bearings. The Yank still lay panting, head in the dirt.

I pulled him over, face upward, and his eyes were almost popping out with the fight to get his breath back. Slowly, slowly it came, more and more evenly. I pulled the belt boxes off him and put them beside the gun, and there we sat, three lost souls in a world gone crazy, waiting for the next joust with fate.

We were in a stark, dead world, not a soul to be seen, and we huddled closer to each other for companionship. Then out of nowhere appeared a lurching, staggering, reeling figure, that stumbled on, unseeing, within six feet of us. He was wounded and, of all things in heaven and earth, a staff officer. He reeled on blindly, and we saw him no more. Where he came from and where he went we knew not. It was weird, uncanny. The corporal motioned to me and started to instruct me in dumb show how to fire the gun. My hearing was slowly coming back, curse the luck, for again I was inflicted with the vibrations. I even caught the dull boom of thousands of guns. He patiently explained the working of the gun.

IT WAS about nine o'clock, we judged, by examining the variations in our watches—they were all wrong as I later found; it was about six A.M. We had lived an eternity in those few hours. Our faces were black and streaked with brown dust, and my hands and sleeve were red and caked with Hartley's blood. The corporal took off his tunic and sat with hands hanging loose, his gray army shirt out at the back, and a heavy Webley revolver at his belt. He looked like a picture of Wild West days. I took off my tunic also, transferring all my belongings to my trousers. As it grew warmer, off came our shirts and we were naked to the waist. The corporal carefully unfastened his field dressing and tucked it all ready to use in the top of his trousers, and as I followed his example fear in one great overwhelming flood came back to me.

I had been so busy I had forgotten about it before, but now I had time to think. Sweat oozed out of me. I felt sick again as I looked at my hands caked with blood, deathly sick. The Yank sat beside me, unmoving, staring, staring. The corporal wrote a note and passed it to me. It was short and to the point.

> In case I get it first, you must not leave the gun under any circumstances, until either the hammer is in the position I showed you or you have no ammunition left. Take this letter out with you and post it.

I looked up and he had a letter in his hand, which I took and put in my trousers, where it immediately dropped to my knees. I nodded, the corporal nodded in return, and his eyes were soft and dreamy. He was looking at me but not seeing me. I began to think again. The corporal doesn't think I am going to get hit, or he would never have given it to me. Praise be, I am not going to get hit yet. My fears left me. Suddenly the corporal jumped, and I looked. Here they come, at last!

Rat-tat-tat-tattetty-tat! Shoulder to shoulder, rifles slung and shovels in their hands. By heaven, they don't figure we are here! They think we are dead. Look at them jump, twist, fall, fall like hay before a scythe. *Rat-tat-tattety-tat!* They are gone, gone except for odd blundering figures staggering back to their own lines. The corporal looked at me and grinned. I grinned back, exalted. This is great sport. I looked around for the Yank and found him lying in a hole, his tunic reddened near the shoulder. He's hit! I went to fix him up, but the corporal pulled me back, wouldn't let me help him. My chum dying and I daren't leave. He lay there in the hole, huddled up, and the stain grew bigger and bigger.

Here they come. In little groups this time, running from hole to hole. They were hard to hit. You no sooner got one group down than another appeared from somewhere else. They got closer, several grenades began to drop in front of us, and we couldn't see for the smoke. Damn' them, we'll get them yet!

Traverse fire now, steady, easy, one belt gone. Another put in its place. I fumbled it. A jerk, a pull, *rattetty-tattetty-tat-tat!* The grenades stopped, and the smoke drifted away, showing odd figures kicking and wriggling not twenty feet away. The gun was hot; they always get hot, just like the corporal said. Another belt. The gun swung away from me and as I looked I saw them coming up the side.

Rattetty-tattetty-tat-tat! That got 'em. Now right around the other way. The Yank is dying. He lies there . . . The circle bigger now. Suddenly the gun stopped vibrating, and the belt stopped moving. I looked to see what was wrong. The belt was all right, the hammer all right; what the devil's wrong? It's the corporal—clean, neat, quick, right through the forehead. No blood; just a dark hole. He still gripped the gun, and his face was set in a funny smile, the mouth slightly open. It's my turn now. I threw him aside, sat down, pulled the belt, raised the safety, and—*rat-tattetty-tat!*

It swings easy, and gives funny little jumps. I had better hold it tighter. I brought it around on to a group, and they suddenly disappeared except for a few kicking and wriggling. The belt went, and I looked for another. Just one more left, then I can fix the Yank up. I waited for more figures. They came. Then—*rattety-tattety-tat!* An eternity passed. A stoppage. I looked at the hammer. A No. 1 stoppage, I knew. I ejected, pulled the belt and reloaded. More figures with hand grenades again.

The gun stopped again, and I found the last belt empty. I hunted for a rifle, but there were none. I took the corporal's revolver and identity disk. He was Church of England, I saw. I looked for the Yank and knelt beside him. He smiled. What grit! I couldn't have done that. What courage! I tore off his tunic and found a bad hole, which I covered with my own dressing, and pulled him to his feet, motioning him to walk. He nodded, stumbled, then staggered.

Halfway down the hill I looked behind, to see figures closing in after us. German! I pushed the Yank on ahead and hunted for the revolver. I left it in the hole! I haven't a darn thing. I looked behind again; they were getting closer. What shall I do? They will start shooting soon. I ran blindly on, thankful to see that the Yank had got farther ahead, possibly ten feet. I looked back once more and saw a big fellow with rifle on the ready, bayonet down and aimed at my back, my kidneys. I could feel it going in. What shall I do? He doesn't intend to shoot or he would have done it before. He wants to bayonet me, that's it. He wants to stick it in my ribs. What can I do? I have it. I'll stop suddenly and turn on him as he runs at me, grab the bayonet and kick him. Kick him in the right spot, and he's done. Can I do it? I looked behind; he was ten feet away.

Now—turn—grab—kick. He dropped, screaming, writhing.

The other Fritzies were some distance behind. I'll soon make the woods now. Where is the Yank? Oh, there he is, sitting waiting for me. I staggered up to him, pulled him to his feet, and began to find how tired I was.

"Come on, Yank; you got to."

I hit him. He was dazed and weak and I couldn't carry him. It was when my hand went out to pull him up to his feet that I saw my hand was open from one side to the other, covered with blood, dripping. Oh, hell! What does it matter? Must have been the bayonet. Let it bleed. On again, through the woods, up over the ridge, down to the village. Bloody, dirty, dazed, tired, deaf, helping each other, equipment gone, gun gone, everything gone. Patting each other, coaxing each other, forcing each other ahead. Life, death, war, hell itself was forgotten in that one supreme effort to reach the village.

WHEN you are footsloggers in the infantry you see less of the war than a man ten miles behind the lines. The ones who see the full layout of the puzzle are those who arrange the pieces, the staff officers. For example, we, as infantrymen, did not find out till after the battle that there were seven German divisions attacking two brigades of Canadians. We did not know that one of the brigadier generals had been killed and the other wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans at the beginning of the battle, so that it was practically every man for himself.

Our own colonel had also been killed, our whole staff broken and disorganized. And so, by all the laws of war, we should have been in flight; never before in history had so many head officers been lost and the infantrymen left to their own resources, and obliged to organize their defenses. It spoke for the discipline of Canadians, not the orthodox army discipline of brass buttons and military police, but a voluntary discipline that was stronger than bars of iron.

We did not know that our artillery, caught when a relief was in progress, had no chance of fighting, or that the nearest supports were miles away; in fact we had forgotten all about them. We knew that Fritz was attacking as never before and it was up to us to stop him. When army experts think of war, they proceed, usually, on academic lines, lines of cold blooded, logical deduction with the most important factor of all left out, the human factor, and many times they have been proved notably wrong. According to their logic, the Spanish Armada should have defeated Drake. The Germans should have walked through Sanctuary Woods on that day as if no one were there.

Seven divisions, one hundred and forty thousand of the fittest troops the Germans could produce, not Prussians but Wurtembergers, against two brigades of less than half strength after the mines had exploded, probably four thousand fighting men all told. The Germans' total advance was a few hundred yards against this array. What stopped them? The spirit of one brigade, a brigade which had been held in derision by other Canadian units, that brigade called the C. M. Runs.

But let us go on to the village.

At last we arrived, broken, sobbing wrecks of men, hardly able to see, hardly able to wipe the sweat from our eyes with bloodstained hands. I felt like one drunk and was practically carrying the Yank, whose legs moved like mechanical limbs at my orders. A stretcher bearer saw us, and came out and took him. I followed to where, behind some houses, we came on the flotsam of battle. Boots, boots, boots, row on row with toes pointing to the sky, hundreds of them. And there was a continual soft wailing and moaning, with once in awhile a shriek from shell shock cases. By some freak my ears were back to normal again.

I had to wait my turn beside the Yank. The doctors were very busy and no wounded could be evacuated yet on account of the barrage. Shells were falling at intervals around. Once—well, one dropped close. I hunched against the wall, staring out with dead eyes, and somebody put a cigaret between my lips. I felt a needle go in my arm. It was a shot of anti-tetanus.

After awhile somebody took my hand, I heard a grunt and looked up to see that the doctor had at last arrived at me. He looked at my eyes, drew a surgical needle out and stitched the wound of my hand together, after flooding it with iodine which seared and burned so much that the agony of it was delicious. I was alive. I hadn't felt the needle, but there was no doubt about the stitching, which I watched. A tag was tied to my braces and I looked at it stupidly. On it was only one word, "re-open". I wondered dully what it meant. Then somebody else came along and a good shot of rum was poured down my throat.

I stood up then, feeling dizzy, weak, with dull aches all over. I looked at the Yank. He looked almost ethereal. Was he dead? No, he had a tag on too, but I couldn't make out the writing. He was breathing quietly, peacefully. I was a walking wounded and therefore could make my own way out to safety.

I was standing up taking my bearings when an officer came, our machine gun officer. He was peering in the face of every man he met, and had his tunic off and his shirt open, ready for wounds and a quick application of bandages. As he came to me he looked at me sharply.

"Hey, you're a gunner, aren't you?" I nodded. "Well, I need you, old son. No blighty for you for awhile yet. Where are you hit?" I showed him my hand. "Oh, is that all? Well, I'm sorry, but we need you, need you bad. Come with me."

I followed him, still in a daze, and we went behind some more houses, down a cellar, piled high with machine gun ammunition and one or two spare guns. He handed me his water bottle with the invitation to "take a good swig", which I did, letting it gurgle down till I could hold no more. I almost felt normal again. My face began to burn, though, and I felt sick. He was speaking:

"Say, you are one of the new draft, aren't you? What happened to your gun?" I told him. "Oh, that was it, was it? I wondered what the hell was holding them up. Good old Spence. He got it, did he?"

I nodded again, and leaned against the wall, so tired was I. The officer seemed tired too. Poor beggar, I saw he was having his troubles.

"Well," he said at last, "I guess there is no damn' good being down here. Say, can you carry the tripod and four belt boxes? If you can I will take the gun, spare barrel and six boxes. We ought to have some fun with them."

"What, you figure on my going back? Into that? You have a hell of an impression of my brains!"

He looked serious.

"Well, listen, I'll tell you what. You help me out in getting the gun through and then you can beat it."

I groused, but took the belt boxes, put them in sand bags and grabbed the tripods. They were heavy. My head was throbbing and burning. I'll bet it was that shot the doctor gave me. We staggered out into the blinding sunlight, the officer leading the way, and curiously I felt quite strong for awhile. We went over the road, up Observatory Ridge, and on the top we rested, panting. The ground was dotted with khaki clad figures, some whole, some not, and all with the Maple Leaf shining in the sunlight. We weren't supposed to shine them, but we did. Our vanity helped our morale. Evidently Fritz had got his, for gray uniforms were piled in queer heaps here and there. Machine gunnery here. Whose gun was it? The officer shouted:

"This is where Speed's gun was—blown up by a shell. He did a hell of a lot of work, though, before it happened."

The scene was a grim one—bits of bodies, parts of machine guns, belt boxes, cartridges and empty cases. We came on lines of dead Germans, almost perfect windrows, where the machine gun had caught them. There were wounded here and there and we picked our way daintily among them. One fellow wanted a drink awfully badly, and his eyes followed me. Poor devil, I signed to him I didn't have a bottle and called the officer, who came back and gave him some of the rum. His eyes were grateful and soft.

The tripod was cutting into my bare flesh and the belt boxes were taking the skin off. I cursed myself for a fool ever to have come back. We arrived in the woods and saw odd infantrymen here and there, resting and doing the queerest things. One chap was wiping off his boots, another was trying to cut a slice in his tunic for a sling. Another was methodically cleaning his rifle, holding it up to see if it was clear. There weren't very many. One man about every fifteen or twenty feet. We came to a halt behind a fallen dugout. There were feet sticking out of the earth. An infantryman crawled over and said—

"Got any cigarets?"

The officer disappeared ahead, I mounted the gun, inserted a belt, gave him some cigs from my store, almost having to remove my trousers to get them. They were broken, crushed, but we smoked the pieces, and sat quite companionably, resting.

Odd figures would stagger or scurry past us, wounded and runners going back to report. I asked, "Who are in front of us?" as I couldn't imagine this as the front line, it was so quiet just then, and the barrage was falling behind us. My new acquaintance grinned.

"Nobody now. There were some machine guns, but they have disappeared."

I was startled, and said:

"Well, where the hell are the Germans? I came through awhile ago and they were right on my tail. And where were you guys? I didn't see anybody when I came through."

His answer was startling:

"I'm not a footslogger. I'm a company

cook, and this bunch is a mixed outfit from headquarters. We met the Fritzies in here, hand to hand. See this?" He pointed to a hole in the side of his tunic which I thought was a tear.

"Bayonet?" I asked.

"Yep. We had one glorious time here for a minute." His eyes looked off into the distance. "My helper got it too. One of the best."

SUDDENLY the officer dropped between us, sighted the gun and started to fire. Rifles began to crack, but I couldn't see what they were firing at. Then I saw forms flitting, sneaking up on us. Rifle grenades began to arrive. The officer surely knew his business, for the gun cracked steadily and all I had to do was sit and watch for the end of the belt. The grenades got closer and, as I sat half reclining with my feet in the bottom of the hole, I felt a stinging sensation, then numbness. No pain at all, but I saw a ragged hole in my puttees with blood coming out slowly.

Then the end of a belt came and I was back to business and I forgot about it in the next few minutes as the gun was getting hot and stoppages were frequent. The officer was having trouble getting the range, too, because of the smoke. My tongue and mouth were again coated with cordite. Another jam. Damn the gun! This time it was hopeless. The shell had broken off and jammed the barrel.

We burnt our hands badly changing barrels, as to do this we had to take the gun almost to pieces. We got it fixed—too late. They were on us, and I picked up the jammed barrel as the officer's revolver began to bark. The rest was a daze. Grunts, shouts, curses, a rifle shot blazing right in front of me but facing sideways. Something hit me in the stomach and I went out like a log.

I awoke to find myself in the hole still, but it was evening now, and dusk settling. I felt pains in my stomach, my jaw, and worst of all in my leg. I looked down at my leg, which was very stiff, and the puttee was soaked with blood. If I took it off the bleeding would start again, and if I left it on I would get gangrene. What the devil should I do? No, hadn't I a shot of that dope! I'd leave it. My jaw was bruised, only a slight cut, and my stomach had a very bad welt shaped like a gun butt. So that was it. My hand was bleeding again. What a mess! Good heavens, who was coming? Germans! I was behind the lines!

Two figures in gray with red crosses on their arms had stopped at the hole. I tried to look brave and snarl, but I'm afraid it was a very weak attempt. They were stepping over the bodies at the bottom of the hole and around the edge. There were two or three other khaki figures lying there beside my own. I heard the moaning and groaning of wounded but couldn't place it exactly. There seemed to be a lot. The Germans gave me a look and then one had compassion and gave me a drink. I wasn't worth worrying over. They went right through the officer's pockets, taking everything, even his boots—nice, soft, shiny ones.

There was a Fritz wounded there in the hole, his jaw nearly off. My gun barrel did that, I said to myself. At last they passed on, taking the Fritz with them. My head began to throb. Well, thank God the Fritzies weren't as bad as they said. They left me alone to die in peace. In war you look after your own side first, naturally.

When there were no German wounded to look after, they would come back for us. I couldn't help it. I thought I was alone among the dead, and I groaned, and groaned again. I would have given anything to cry. Then a miracle happened. I thought I was dreaming, but the officer moved, slowly rolled over, oh so slowly, and said—

"Can you see any Fritzies?"

I said no.

"Thank God. Well, we sure are in one hell of a mess. Where did you get it?"

"All over," I replied between gasps. "The devils didn't leave a whole bone in my body."

He spoke again:

"I got a beauty, a bayonet in the shoulder. The blighter was aiming at my belly but I knocked his arm up. Are your hands free? Do you think you could bandage it?" He groaned in spite of himself and added, "It is pretty darn' painful."

"Can you roll over?" I asked, and as he rolled toward me I rolled a little in his direction and stuck his field dressing on the wound.

It surely was a mess, a long gash with cords sticking out. I couldn't tie it, though, with one hand. So we both thought it over for a minute, then he suggested changing his Sam Browne belt to the other shoulder to hold it. I had a difficult time rolling him over and fixing his belt, as we dared not raise ourselves upward or we would get it. It was finally done, but I had broken open my leg wound and, unwinding the puttee, found it was a bad hole through the calf. I could feel the shrapnel, a jagged piece, under the flesh. I groaned again, my mouth dry, my head throbbing and throbbing. I slid down and groped among the bodies until I caught a khaki tunic, groped, found the field dressing, tore it open with my teeth and wrapped it round but couldn't tie it unless I used my other hand which was very stiff and burned and seared. Sweat poured off me as I tied the dressing.

I HUNTED for my cigaret, and found it still going, so holding my hand over the spark, and blowing the smoke down to the ground, I smoked, smoked, smoked. It was dark now and felt cooler. Not a shell was dropping over us. They would have to be our guns, if there were any, I thought to myself. The German barrage was on ahead. Evidently their wounded went by another route than through the wood, for we saw no one. Flares thrown up by the Germans convinced us they must be up on Observatory Ridge.

Rats! I had forgotten about the rats. I could see their eyes gleaming, hear them rustle. Oh, I can't stand any more. And now rats! Haven't I stood enough, suffered enough?

I shuffled down beside the officer, hunted for his revolver, found it, and struck at them, and cursed, lying across him to get at them. Scurry, scurry; I could see their eyes. I forgot about my wounds, troubles, pains, aches, everything, and like a snarling beast, struck and beat at them.

Then a storm of rifle and machine gun fire broke out, red and green flares floated in the sky, and the German artillery burst like a flood of bass drums, pounding in my ear. The rats disappeared and figures rushed past and I heard groans, and curses in German; then came men running, stumbling and some one fell into our shell hole. I struck and struck and struck, and was still pounding him with the butt of the revolver when I heard voices, English, and good old Canadian curses. They passed, following the Germans. I still struck the figure though he had given his last groan long before.

I was in a daze. I believe my mind was going. The officer still mumbled and groaned. Another wave of men passed over, not even glancing at us. Then came the third wave, and these were slower, hunting, hunting, listening for groans. I could see them by the flares, and I shouted and shouted. A figure came toward us.

"Hey, Joe, here are a couple." A welcome voice said, "You can stop hitting that poor blighter now, Bud."

My hand moved up and down, then somebody felt my body, and my mouth was opened and a pill of some kind thrust in.

"God, Joe, these are the C.M.R's, not our mob at all."

"Well, what the hell do you think of that? C.M.R's. An officer too, without any boots. They pinched his boots. How is your guy? Mine's off his bean but O.K., I think."

Then another voice broke in:

"This beggar hasn't even a shirt. He's as crazy as a loon. Been pounding some poor devil's face to pulp, and was still doing it till I told him to let up. Can yours walk? I think I can handle this one."

Joe's voice again:

"By the looks of things these C.M.R's sure put up some fight. Say, we better get out of here before the barrage starts."

I felt myself being lifted, my arm put around somebody's shoulder, while my other arm still flopped up and down, up and down. I couldn't seem to stop it. Am I crazy? I must be. That chap said I was.

I felt all right, no pain, nothing, only that arm. I couldn't stop it. My mind seemed perfectly clear. We stumbled on, and I heard my man trying to encourage me. Suddenly his nerve gave.

"For God's sake stop flopping that arm. It gives me the creeps."

I tried to cut it out, but couldn't. I didn't seem to have an arm. It wasn't there, I couldn't make a connection.

At last a road. We moved along it and I heard the sound of an automobile idling. A heave, a push, and I lay on something hard, then we were moving. Somebody else is there now, too. The sound of gasps, groans—bump, rumble, rumble, bump. Screams from somewhere, sounding like my own voice. Rumble, rumble, at last a stop, lights, doctors, stretchers, a funny smell, then sleep, blessed sleep, glorious sleep. Thank God for sleep. The battle of Sanctuary Woods was over for me.

CHAPTER V

THE HOSPITAL

I AWOKE peacefully, feeling fine but sort of tired and lazy. I didn't want to do anything but just lie there. I looked up at the ceiling and found even that made me too tired, so I closed my eyes again and went off into another sleep.

When I woke again, a face peered at me and smiled. Not a nice smile, but one of those cold blooded professional ones nurses give. I didn't answer that smile. I don't like her, I wish she would go away. Then she spoke, after taking my pulse.

"Well, how does Canada feel today?"

Another smile. Darn that smile. I turned pettish and said—

"Oh, go away; that smile gets on my nerves." By jove, I can't move, can't feel. "Where the hell is the rest of me?" I looked at her again and gasped like a fish. She put her hand on my head and said—

"Are you strong enough to tell me your regimental number and to what battalion you belong?"

Oh! Still the army. Always a number, never a human being, just a number! Oh, well, what does it matter? I went to sleep again.

I awoke at night, at least it was dark, and I was frightened. It did matter. Where the devil was I?

"Hey, hey!" I intended it to be a shout but it issued forth as a squeak and sounded funny.

I grinned to myself. I seemed easily scared. But it served, for I heard a rustle, lights went on, then off again, and on again, at the top of my bed this time. I blinked dazedly and couldn't keep my eyes open for a minute. A different face peered over me this time, a motherly face, no smile, but a look of concern.

"Well, child, what's the matter? How do you feel now?"

She put her hand on my head too, but I liked it and wished she would keep it there. It was nice and cool and soft, not flabby, but soft like silk. I spoke, even managed to grin, she was so nice.

"Oh, I guess I'm all right, sister, only I woke up scared. Say, sister, am I all here? I mean, am I?"

"Now, child, don't worry yourself. You are all there, except for the bits of iron we pulled out."

"Well, why the dickens can't I move my body then?" I demanded querulously.

She cupped her hand under my head and lifted it up so I could see the rest of my bed. Oh, so that was it, was it? Strapped in. I must have gone looney. And as if in confirmation she said:

"You know, child, I do believe you are going to be worth the trouble. I believe you are going to pull through. But haven't you given us a time! You broke open three times to my knowledge just as they were getting healed too." Three times.

"Say, sister, how long have I been here?"

She thought for a moment.

"Let me see. You arrived here June 4th, and today is July 2nd. You—"

Four weeks! Where the dickens had my memory been the last few weeks?

"Was I looney, sister?"

She smiled.

"Looney? If ever a man was looney, as you call it, you were. But enough of that, child. Can you remember your name? You know your people probably think you are dead. We knew you were a Canuck because a whole trainload of you arrived. But we never found anything except a crumpled letter ready to post, which somebody else might have given you, and an identity disk in your pocket, not on your neck, so we figured it must be somebody else's. So we thought we had better wait till you came to. But we never guessed it would take so long."

At the mention of the letter memory came back in a flood. I broke out in a sweat, and my hand began its old motion —rise and fall, rise and fall. The nurse soothed me, petted me, coaxed me back to normal again. Finally I gave her my name and number, and she gave me a glass of hot milk and a pill which sent me off to sleep again immediately.

It was morning when I awoke. One of my legs felt stiff, due probably to bandages. I tried to lift my head and found it stiff too. My mouth felt funny and I found that I had lost some teeth somehow on the side of my mouth. I felt my chest, and found it strapped with court plaster. I must be a wreck. Then a glaring face came into my line of vision, to interrupt my investigations, and a strange voice said:

"H'm. Awake, are you? I suppose I will have to wash you."

An involuntary "God forbid" came from me, which only made the face glare still more. Then it disappeared, and I heard the sound of a basin placed on a locker beside my bed and I squinted sideways. The face was grinning now, with what I imagined was a fiendish smile; but very gently the washing began, so gently that I looked through soapy eyes, trying to discover whether it was the same face beside me. It was, but now I recognized the face as being not ugly but friendly, so I ventured a "Good morning, sister," very meekly.

"Oh, good morning, Canada. You must be feeling well this morning to give me a dirty slam like that. How do you feel?"

"Pretty good, sister."

"I thought you must be a Canuck. I am a Yank myself. I thought so. Another of those bally Eastern Canadians who look down on their boastful cousins!"

I hastily disclaimed all such ideas. Personally I loved all Americans, etc., etc., and mentally I kicked myself as a traitor to my U. E. L. ancestors. She only laughed and said:

"Cranberries, you can't even lie decently. And now what is your number?"

I gave it, "51394, sister," very meekly.

"Well, thank heaven it isn't in the hundreds of thousands like one of your chaps we had here. What do you want for breakfast?"

I suddenly realized I was hungry, so I asked for ham and eggs and tea and toast, but she raised her hand.

"I said breakfast. You can have tea all right, and a little toast, and maybe some maple syrup."

"Maple syrup!" I squeaked, and such a delightful kindly smile spread over her face.

"Yes, maple syrup. When I joined this hospital and saw so many Canadians coming through I tried to think of something they couldn't get but would dearly love to have. So I hit upon maple syrup. I wrote to a friend in New York State and got him to send me maple syrup, so every one of you Canucks, whenever you come to your senses, get maple syrup just to buck you up." And away she rustled.

AFTER breakfast came the doctor, a woman! Good heavens. I felt like a blushing girl. She poked and probed as ruthlessly as a man, and that Yankee stood grinning at my blushes.

"H'm, h'm! Temperature normal, How is your head?"

"All right," I replied. Did I hear sounds? Did I dream? Not that I remembered. Did I remember what happened in France? Why, yes, I did. I started to sweat. Still questions. Couldn't she leave me alone? Why was it necessary to go back to that? Where was I hit first? I felt sore, and said I wasn't hit, I cut my hand on a bayonet. Oh, that was the first was it? "Yes," grumpily. Was I sent back in the line after that? "Yes." Where was I hit next? "In the leg." And where after that? "Oh, hell, nurse, or doctor, can't you leave me alone?"

She grew gentle, put her hand on my head.

"Now, now, take it easy; we just want to find out the facts, so we can repair the damage."

I was still petulant and said:

"I didn't have time to mark the spots, but I got one on the jaw and one on the stomach. If you are trying to make out I was shell-shocked, you are mistaken. I wasn't."

"Well, then, what was it?" She spoke still more gently.

I kept twitching and sweating, and my head was throbbing again.

"Oh, hell. Give me a chance. I can't answer your questions; leave me alone." I tried to roll over, but again that voice, so gently:

"What was it? Come on. Tell us and then you can go to sleep. What was it?" I burst out—

"Damn you, it was rats, R-A-T-S, *RATS!*"

THE NEXT day I came back to reality. The hospital, I gathered, was in England. I must cable home to let them know I was still alive, and to get some money. So I blarneyed my Yankee friend to loan me some money to send the cable, and sat back content just to rest and dream.

It would be appropriate here to explain something that the English people often forget. And that was the fact that England was not the home country of the Canadians. My home was three thousand miles away. I had no friends here, to whom I could telegraph, and who would come to welcome me, and bring me those little things that somehow satisfy one inwardly. We had nothing of that sort. Is it any wonder that sometimes we got drunk, just to forget? When an English Tommy arrived in England, he was home. But we were in just another country. When they got ten days' leave, it meant something. To us, it was a holiday in London or Paris; it didn't matter which, only in one place they spoke English.

My friendship with the Yankee nurse grew. I always called her Yank. At first it made her mad, and she was almost good looking when she got really sore. We had lots of talks together as I grew stronger, frequent hot debates about the war and nations.

One day the matron happened to be present during our arguments—the usual hardboiled English hospital matron. I remember saying to the Yankee—

"You must admit that you Americans are getting rich out of the war."

That started her; the words came so fast that it was hard to get her meaning. But it went like this:

"Say, listen. You English like to call us dollar-chasers, while you are far above such things. Do you know why? Well, I'll tell you. Back in the States I have a friend, a millionaire, who is just like yourself, looking down on the rest of us. All the common herd thinks of is money, he says, while he—he is interested in the higher things. Sure, he can be interested in the higher things. Why? Because he has all the money he needs. Well, that's just the way with England, now. What about when it was young and poor? Napoleon called your country a nation of shopkeepers, but you didn't care how you got your money. You sold opium, you knighted pirates, you did everything to encourage your people to get money. No questions asked. In fact a lot of you were made into lords and dukes if you were foxy and hoggish enough. Your imperialism has been a blot on history (like that of most colonizing nations), but up to now you are the richest nation in the world. Now you can act virtuous. You don't believe in stealing because you don't need to steal. You don't believe in war because in war you are a defender. So throw your stones, the worst we do is imitate you. Only we haven't got the nerve to compliment people for stealing yet."

I laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks. By Jove, she had hit them off. That of course was the policy of all governments. The matron grew purple, and pranced from the room.

"Well, Yank," I said, "you must admit that you people are imitating us pretty well. You're in a fair way to getting all the money, and I'll bet a dollar that after this war you'll be looking virtuous yourselves, eh?"

She laughed, having recovered her breath and good nature.

"I guess you're right there, Canuck."

Another way of teasing her was to put the Australians against the Yankees. They seemed to have boastfulness in common. I told her—

"You Yanks are worse than the Aussies for 'telling the world'." She laughed, but then became serious.

"I'm going to turn the other cheek to your insults. I am afraid deep down in my heart that it isn't the Aussies or the Yanks who are the fighters, it is you Canucks."

I nearly jumped out of the bed, and shouted:

"What? Treachery! Treachery! What can I do now? I must compliment you in return. Horrible! Horrible."

So passed the weeks, weary, tiresome weeks, only lightened by our forensic jousts, and the visits of some brewery duchess now and then. These women did their bit by distributing favors to the soldiers. Sometimes we felt that this was done in the spirit of giving a dog a bone. I had heard from home, so had plenty of money and could be independent of such charity. One day I was a little more tired and nervous than usual. A little homesick, too, with no one to visit me, until one of these women came around, accompanied by a nurse.

"Oh, so this is a Canadian, is it?" I felt like a new species under the magnifying glass, which did not increase my amiability. "And how are you, my man?"

I felt like telling her that I wasn't her man, I never would be her man, and that I wouldn't be found dead beside her, and sat grimly silent.

"Here are some cigarets," she added, throwing a packet of cheap English cigarets on my bed. I looked at her, my patience gone, and spoke.

"I have absolutely *no use* for that kind of cigaret. Nor for you either," I added fiendishly. "For heaven's sake, go away. Take her away, nurse; she makes me sick. She thinks she is at the zoo, feeding the monkeys."

I turned my head in to the pillow, and had my first real laugh in days. I shook with laughter, until the sister came to quiet me. It was not the Yankee this time, but the quiet little English girl, who made you think of violets and a breeze rustling the leaves. My visitor had reminded me of a mongrel dog that had been trying to imitate a thoroughbred. I told the sister so, and she said—

"Hush, hush; you mustn't talk like that." But she smiled.

She was a V.A.D, and scrubbed floors, did all sorts of menial work, and generally acted as an orderly; but my Yankee friend told me afterwards she was Lady somebody or other. No wonder she smiled. The Yankee was hard to cajole, but I could get anything out of the English girl, even some beer, which I hugely enjoyed because it was forbidden.

THEN the air raid came. One night, just as I was about to drop off to sleep, the English girl came into the room and, after putting out the light, took up her position beside the bed.

"What's the idea, sister?" I asked.

Then, before she could answer, some

sort of firecracker went off somewhere and the street lights went out. It was absolutely pitch dark. Then the sister spoke, briefly, but with a world of significance:

"It's an air raid. And this hospital is close to Charing Cross." Charing Cross, as one of the bigger railroad centers of London, was a target for the Zeps.

Anti-aircraft guns began to bark, sounding like thunder. A searchlight lighted the room for an instant, showing her face, pale, ethereal. I took her hand firmly and said—

"Sit on the side of the bed where I can look at you."

I spoke almost harshly. I felt that I wanted to comfort her. The bark of guns grew louder, the searchlight more brilliant. *It* was coming our way, I felt it in my bones. Her hands grew nerveless, lax. That was dangerous; had she fainted?

I waited for another searchlight. I believed she had. I pulled her down, stroked her head, spoke soothingly. Then a long mournful shriek sounded right on top of us, followed by a heavy crash, that echoed and re-echoed.

The window broke and pieces flew all over. One struck the bed, and I pulled a blanket over her, my bare feet touching glass as I got up. I smelt the peculiar odor of cordite.

Another—a heavy boom—farther away. The anti-aircraft grew suddenly furious, then died away. I cursed the Germans for bringing women into it. The sound of guns died away in the distance. I prayed that they had got the airship. The street lights went on, a fire engine passed, another and another. Must be a fire somewhere. Ambulances now. I could tell by the clang of their bells.

Then whistles for taxis. It was over.

I WAS allowed to get up now in the afternoons and could even hobble around a bit. I would be going to convalescent camp soon, on the way back to France.

It was then the beginning of August and one morning, after the usual visit of the doctor, the bandages were taken off for good. I was sent down to the clinic for a more thorough examination and finally pronounced fit, after further treatment in a convalescent home. The nurse, my Yankee friend, broke the news to me.

"Well, Canuck, you are on the way back now. You are to start on your return trip to France, and gosh, I hope you get a two way ticket."

I managed to work up a grin.

"You made too darn' good a job of me, that's the trouble, sister. If you had only treated me a little rougher, I might have got home to Canada."

She laughed.

"That's you men all over. Always blame it on the women." There was a silence for a minute, then she added, "Say, child, if I were you I would tell my real age to the doctor. Oh, yes, you are! I have been in this world too long not to know a kid when I meet one. Honest, I am sorry to see you go back."

The next day the news came that I was to go to Uxbridge Convalescent just out of London—a Canadian convalescent camp. They both saw me off, and the Yankee talked and talked while the other was quiet. As I kissed them goodby I promised to see them and write when I could. Then I was off to Uxbridge, and the return trip had begun.

CHAPTER VI

"I GAIN THE HEIGHTS I CAN NOT HOLD"

THE Canadian Convalescent Home at Uxbridge had been somebody's country residence or estate. It was a big rambling house with many passages, but spoiled by additional huts built temporarily outside the main residence.

I went through the usual examinations and received a pay book, so that I was once more on strength, and a possible candidate for the line again.

It was here I met Coles. It had been a million years seemingly since we had sat together in the same tent. Yet here he was as large as life, in the same ward as myself in one of the huts. A group of men were playing poker when the nurse showed me my bed. I was tired, so I just flopped on it and went to sleep. They woke me for supper and it was then that he came out and peered into my face.

"By all the gods of war, it's Slim." It took me a second to recognize him, for his face was badly scarred.

We had to celebrate our meeting with due ceremony, so we hied away to a pub in town, all the time talking excitedly.

"Where did you get it?"

"Sanctuary Woods."

"Oh, I got her in July at Mount Sorrell, first trip in the line."

"Trench mortar; say, those things put the fear of God in you."

Then at the pub, after getting a drink in me, I finally summoned up courage to ask—

"Did you ever hear about Hartley?"

There was silence, while Coles thought hard, and my glass of ale was halfway to my mouth where it had stopped, awaiting his answer.

"No, Slim, I never heard what happened to him. Nobody seems to know."

I finished the drink. A fellow felt he needed a drink in times like that.

"Say, Slim, did you ever hear about Knight?"

"No, what was it?"

"Well, you remember how that big slob had us all scared to death of him? How he kept talking about the South African War, and how we poor blighters didn't know how to fight, didn't have any discipline and all that. Well, that big son of a gun came with me to the 4th C. M. R's and on the very first trip in the big boob showed yellow, tried to get a transfer, and then on the second night sneaked down to the horse lines and reported sick. Well anyway— Have another drink?"

I did. "We came out of the line to the Zillebecke dugouts and stayed there on a working party, and he was sent back up and reported to the officer there, and the sergeant was wise to him, and put him on a working party with me that night. We had to go up to a place called 'China Wall'."

China Wall was a barricade of sand bags built across part of the salient to stop enfilade fire from machine guns.

"We just got there when a machine gun opened up, and of course we were on the wrong side of that damned wall. Knight was right behind me, and he let out a yell you could hear a mile away: 'I'm hit, I'm dying. Oh, stretcher bearers!'

"Well, the bearers were busy, so another guy and me lugged him out, and all the time he kept yelling and moaning. We had trouble enough without that, and at last we got him out in a ditch and stopped to see where the trouble was, as we honestly thought he must be hit bad. Well, sir, we hunted over that guy from top to bottom and couldn't find nary a hole, though he was blubbering like a kid. We pulled him half a mile, the big overgrown stiff, and we were both little bugs ourselves, so you can imagine, Slim, how we sweated.

"We looked at each other when the next flare came up. He was shell shocked, so we thought. But anyway we searched him again, and pulled off his tunic and shirt, even his puttees, and pulled his trousers down looking for that damned hole and at last we found it. In the boot!

"Believe it or not, Slim, but that stiff had been clicked with a bullet in the heel, and it had knocked the heel clear off his boot and probably shocked his leg a bit. We were so damn' disgusted that we told the Lord all about it for the next five minutes. Then the other guy says, 'He is a casualty; at least everybody says he is, except us, so why not make him one?' Well, you can bet your neck that fazed me for a minute, but I was willing to learn, so I says, 'How?'—'Well,' says the other guy, 'how about planting a bullet through his leg? He'll be no damned good anyhow. And he will be happy to get to England for six months.'

"Well, Slim, we debated the matter there and then and finally decided to give him a blighty. We were just going to do it, when I had an idea and says, 'Say, if we give him a blighty we will have to carry the big stiff to a dressing station.' We tried to make him walk, but he wouldn't. So we decided if we had to carry him, we might as well give him the blighty here where nobody could see us. So we propped him out in the bottom of the trench, one leg stuck out nice and easy, and I took a shot, and damned if I didn't miss. So the other guy tried and he missed, too. 'Course it was pretty dark and we couldn't see properly, but I found out then why so many guys get left in a battle. We fired a whole damn' magazine and missed every one.

"So we gave it up as hopeless and lugged the son of a gun to the village. There is a field post there in a dugout, and just outside we lammed him on the head with an entrenching tool handle and carted him in. One first class number one casualty all nicely fixed up for England. I almost felt like asking the other guy to give me one, it was so easy.

"Well, I got it myself next trip, and landed at Leeds, and one day, who do you think I met? Knight—Knight in all his glory, with a wound stripe and everything. Can you beat it?"

I couldn't, so we had another drink. I missed Hartley. Hartley wouldn't let me get tight, neither would the Yank. I wondered where they were. Another drink.

And so it went on, and I heard of all our old tent companions, all except my two chums, the Yank and Hartley. We were drunk by now, and we had a "crying jag". I remember going back in a haze of maudlin emotion, saying, "Poor old Hartley, damn' war, poor old Hartley, my bes' frien', damn' ol' war," and singing, "In the evening by the moonlight," and ending with a sermon on war. Damn' war, poor old Hartley. At last the hut, and a nurse and, "You know, nurse, he was my bes' friend, I loved him, damn' war, oh, lemme alone. Poor old Hartley." Soothing hands, gentle hands, soothing words, "Poor kid, poor kid." Soothing hands, "Poor kid," then drunken slumber.

I didn't wake with a dark brown taste or with the morning after the night before feeling, but rather the reverse, quivering with life and energy. I don't know what it was, but that drunk had loosed up some pent-up flood of emotion, which I was glad to get rid of. I felt fine, and looked for Coles, the one whom I had despised.

ONE DAY after another passed, and it was booze and women. London was a short distance by underground railway, train or tram. I mightn't come back, so we made hay while the sun shone.

One day we had caught the steam train after our afternoon exercise and were off to London. Our train stopped at a huge munition works, and the train filled with women workers till our compartment was jammed, and as we were the only men in it, we got up and offered our seats, Coles with a smirk, I with bad grace. Giggles, nudges, remarks, passed from one girl to another; jostles, more or less inadvertent or meant for us; more giggling, more jostles and nudges till I broke out into a sweat. The compartment was hot, stifling and odorous. I was packed into a corner.

"My Lord," I thought, "has this anything to do with the grand passion you read about; is this what women are like if left alone long enough?" I grew sick. To the devil with them. No more for me. I was finished. Coles was in his element. How the devil had I ever seen anything in him? We arrived at last and I made a break for the door. He called after me but I disregarded him and ran as if pursued by the devil himself.

I spent the time now on my hand in a pub. There I met a New Zealander. Fine people, these New Zealanders; quiet, decent, wonderful fighters. We drank our beer together, and began talking about the war generally.

He was like myself, alone in England, and had been badly wounded at the Dardanelles. I was interested. What was the Dardanelles like? He smiled a curious, set way.

"Just one bloody mistake after another. The Turks were good fighters and clean. How was France?"

I told him I had taken a Cook's Tour, and only was in France six days in all, so that my impressions were no good.

"Were we getting licked?"

"We were. Give the German a decent chance, with no blockade, and he would have done it. But of course he couldn't now. But still, he will give us one hell of a run for our money."

My new acquaintance had just got word that a chum of his was killed at Pozzierres, and I told him about Hartley. We had another beer, drunk in silence. Would the Yanks come in? What was my opinion?

"Well— Oh— Um— Ah— We-ell."

He grinned.

"That is the best speech I ever heard about it; it explains it so clearly, at least more clearly than the Yanks do themselves," he said.

We both laughed, and had another beer.

THE CANADIANS were on the Somme and my brigade had been in the thick of it there and at Courcellette, the sugar refinery and Mouquet Farm, the biggest advance made since the offensive. That was on September 15th. They had heavy casualties, very heavy. Then back again for Regina Trench, after getting drafts to fill in the blank spaces, and again more drafts. They had started to comb England for men. Coles was sent back, but I wasn't fit yet, so was left. My hut was nearly cleaned out, with only men like myself left.

Then casualties from the Somme with light wounds began to arrive at Uxbridge and every day I watched for C. M. R's, but none turned up. Everybody told me they had got it heavy. It looked bad.

I went to London and looked about for men on leave, but found none. I gave up hope then and let it drop from my mind as much as possible, but I did want news of my friends. I decided to visit the hospital where I had been, just in hope. I asked for my old nurses, and the Yankee came down first, and was delighted to see me, and so on, but really she was terribly busy, the place was choked with wounded, and she ran off, begging me to see her next week.

Then the English girl came, and I saw she looked tired and worn, and I felt like a brute for taking her away from her work. Her face broke into a smile when she saw me, and she took both my hands and surveyed me from head to foot, then kissed me. She was also very busy, but would be off duty at six. Would I meet her then? I said I would, though it meant I was going A. W. O. L. again, and already half my pay was gone in fines. But what the hell?

I was there at six. She was drooping and tired and begged me to take her to some nice quiet place to eat, and be nice to her. I swore by all the gods that I would do my best.

I got some champagne, the best I could find, and fed her chocolate éclairs, which were her weakness. And after awhile her eyes sparkled once more.

Then she told me of her brother. He had been killed on September 13th, and her mother was slowly dying on her feet, yet not whining at all, a real good sport. I asked her about herself. Well, she wasn't feeling any too well, but with all these casualties arriving, what could she do? I mentally cursed war, especially modern war, which absorbed women into its turmoil.

She broke out into quiet sobs; and I let her cry and cry until at last she began to hunt for her powder puff, and blinked up at me with starry shining eyes, with her nose all red and her face streaked, but somehow looking more lovely than ever before. And so she powdered and sniffed, and dried her eyes, and said—

"You know, Canada, you *are* a dear."

I grinned, and said—

"I don't know what the dickens you want, because I have probably been losing your reputation for you already, by treating you like a daughter."

She looked very, very wise, a curious expression, and shrugged, saying:

"That's the trouble. But as you Canucks say, I'm going to marry you or bust."

I was dumbfounded.

"Honest, do you really want to marry a dub like me?"

"I don't know what a dub is," she replied, "but I certainly intend to marry you by fair means or foul."

I couldn't say any more, but pulled her out of the room almost by main force, and growled—

"Come on, let's go to a show, or I will be making a damn' fool of myself."

She giggled and said:

"Success is at hand. I have you on the run."

I did not know how seriously I took her, but I turned on her.

"So help me James," I said, "if you mention marriage to me again tonight I will spank you."

She looked at me for a moment.

"I do believe you would."

"I never lost a bluff yet," I said, "so just try it."

Well, anyway, we were married three days afterward. I gave my age as twenty, though in reality I had just passed my nineteenth birthday. I was granted six days' leave, and those were the most wonderful days of my life, spent in Scotland, among the moors, far away from war.

I became a man. I came to know the small dear things that focus somehow a man's view of the rest of life. . . . One afternoon remains etched in my memory. She sat on the ground, looking over the hills, and I lay, head pillowed in her lap. She had a way I loved of bending down and nipping my ear, or of kissing me, gently, sweetly. It was like the peace of God in my soul. She ruffled my hair gently, all the while looking into the land of women, a land that men can never see.

She quoted a poem, her voice sounding like the ripple of a brook:

"I may not hold the heights I gain
In those rare hours of ecstasy
When scorning ease, despising pain,
Forgetting self, and winning free
From all that most entangles me
I leave the low miasmic plain
Of sloth, of doubt, of greed, or pain,
Companion of a higher train.
I may not hold the heights I gain
In those rare hours of ecstasy,
But God be praised, the lines unfold.
I gain the heights I can not hold."

It was an hour of the heights, however transient.

ON COMING back from my leave, I was told that I had been transferred to the Casualty Center, at Hastings. I had hardly time to phone my wife before I was bustled away. The hospital was getting choked with casualties from the Somme and they were building new huts. We surely must have got it, on the Somme.

At Hastings I went through the usual examinations and was billetted at Bexhill, and put on medicine and duty, the duty being physical exercise and squad drill. Getting us fit for slaughter again, I told myself bitterly.

The first afternoon that I had off, I went to town to post a letter, and as I was walking along the promenade by the sea, I heard a voice behind me:

"By all the gods of war, it's Slim. Hey, Slim!"

I turned, to see the Yank, of all people the last I expected to see. Our hands held together, and we grinned at each other like chimpanzees. Neither of us spoke for a long time. I couldn't; there seemed to be a lump in my throat, stopping me. At last he said:

"Well, where the devil did you come from? I thought you were pushing up the daisies!"

"Hear, hear! That's what I thought of you," I replied. There was silence again, while we still grinned foolishly but happily at one another. Then he suggested—

"Let's celebrate." And so we adjourned and drank damnation to all sergeants, majors and Red Caps. He was on leave.

"Yes, sir, the King says to me, he says, 'I want to show you how much I appreciate your winning the war. So would you come over, so I can give you a little token of our esteem?' And I says, 'You bet your neck. King, you just tell the lance corporals what you want done, and us lance jacks will do it.' "

It was the same old Yank, the same queer voice with the lilt in it, and the same old devilment. We had another drink while I plied him with questions.

"Honest, are you really going to be presented?"

He had the grace to blush, but admitted the accusation.

"What for?" I asked suspiciously.

"A V. C," he replied.

"A V. C? A V. C?" I almost shouted.

"Yes, a V. C," he said again, in a sort of shame-faced voice.

"Well, my gosh, what for?"

"Damned if I know. Let's have a drink."

"But what the blazes did you ever do to get a V. C?"

He grinned, such a delightful, whole hearted grin.

"I captured a machine gun on the Somme."

"What?" I asked, incredulously. "Honest? What did it do, walk over and lay down beside you?" Every one knows how hard it is to imagine extraordinary things about people whom we have seen in ordinary circumstances.

He laughed.

"You would take the conceit out of a sub-lieutenant, Slim. You're the same old Slim. Let's have a beer, and I'll tell you the story." He gave the beer order.

"You know, after Sanctuary Woods, when I came back, Daddy had taken over the battalion. (Daddy was a grand old man who had somehow got to France in spite of his age. He had more courage than the whole Expeditionary Force put together. His rheumatism sometimes was so bad he could hardly walk, yet he never left. He would come down the line at night, roaring and cursing, calling us a bloated bunch of tailors' dummies, and so on. How the hell Canada ever expected to win the war with a mob like us, God only knew. Where the hell were the sergeants? Had these men had their shot of rum yet? Well, God help any blasted three stripes caught pinching the ration, and so forth. Yet, after a heavy scrap, there would be tears in his eyes when the roll was called. The battalion would have died for him, and he called us his boys and looked on us and treated us as sons. He had a heart big enough for the world to creep in. He was always broke, for the very worst private could borrow money from him any time, if he had it. His roar was like the cooing of a dove to us . . . And the very high epitaph should be given him, 'We loved him because he first loved us.')

"Well, of course I had to report to him when I first got back, and he said, 'We will make a corporal of you; you aren't any damned good as a private anyway because you don't know anything about machine guns at all.' The men in the M.G. squad were some outfit, with steel helmets, a new kind of gas mask, and all sorts of doo-dads, and oh, yes, they've got the Lee-Enfield rifles now, and the Ross is discarded, except for sniping; and they've got hand carts to haul the guns with. We had a couple more trips in the Salient, fairly quiet ones, then we were relieved to go to the Somme.

"Say, Slim, I forgot to tell you that on the night of our last trip I was detailed off as a guide, and lo and behold, you know the outfits that took over the place from us were the Aussies and the Guards? Well, I spoke to one Aussie and he said, 'We have to come up here and show you blighters how to hold the Salient.' And then I was talking to a Guardsman, and he gave his opinion of the Canucks, as a blank, blank bunch of schoolboys.

"Well, I don't need to tell you how I felt, but I couldn't say anything as they were big sons o' guns. And then to cap it all, I meekly asked another Guardsman what he thought of us, and he, well, to say the least, looked at us with high disfavor. Very high. 'Poor, bleedin' Canucks. Why, my God, they couldn't even put puttees on properly. Put 'em on upside down!' Well, you could imagine what was going on in my interior. I was going to get my own back, by hook or crook.

"So when I arrived at rest camp to look up my outfit, and when I reported with my squad, two men for each company, and two for headquarters, my feelings were not improved by the looks of disdain given us by the officers. Maybe we hadn't shaved or cleaned our brass. Maybe our puttees were ragged and our clothes and equipment dirty. But would shaving win the war?

"Anyway, we started out and by the look on the faces of the guides I had brought, somebody was due for a rough trip into the line. I gave their staff the once-over, and this staff was adorned by one of those officer coves with a monocle, who kept shouting, 'Are you theah?' to the sergeant-major, and passing remarks on how he was almost ashamed to be seen with these guides, they were such a dirty lot, doncher know? That got my goat, and I swore an oath that I would make him dirtier than anybody before I got through with him. Well, to make a long story short, I had to take 'em to Canada Street on Mount Sorrell.

"I would have taken 'em overland through the woods, but when I got to the Zillebecke Road, I had a brilliant idea. Why not take the blighters by the road, and hope for the best? I could go up Davison Street then (that was a communication trench) and it wouldn't be much longer anyway.

"But on the road Fritz had one of those set machine guns, fixed to fire at a certain range always, and this gun was aimed too high for the road, but low enough to throw the most ungodly scare into anybody. And there was a dirty, slimy, watery ditch on each side. So I warned the officer about the gun, and told him that if it started, to pass the word around to dive for the ditch. The word was passed back, and Mulvaney, the guide at the rear, nearly gave the game away. We got nearer and nearer, and I prayed that Fritz would open up; and at last we got to the spot, and heaven be praised, Fritz let her rip. Boy! You should have seen those guys go for that ditch, and heard the curses when they found what it was like. Oh, boy, I laughed myself sick, and like a fool I stood in the middle of the road, doing it.

"Well, they all crawled out, and of course found out that the gun was set high, but having no experience in this kind of war, they wouldn't have been suspicious then, if I hadn't remarked on how they stunk and how I was ashamed to take them into the line. Well, that did it, and of course Mulvaney had to come up and say, 'What was the idea of that message you sent back?' My friend the officer swore he would report me, and he did. I was duly hauled up, and after I had told the whole story Daddy laughed himself sick too, and reduced me to the ranks, but raised me to sergeant right afterwards, and told me to get to hell out, or he would recommend me for a medal."

"Well, by the Lord!" This from me.

"That's nothing. Another guide tried to get the Aussies to walk through the lake, but they got suspicious of that. Oh, yes, we gave 'em a real rough ride in. Oh, say, Slim, you were wanting to know why I'm getting the medal. We marched down to the Somme carrying and pulling those darn' carts, and had a day in the brickfields outside Albert, and I won five hundred francs there at crown and anchor. Then we lugged the things right up to the support lines. Royal Engineers' dump, it was, along a narrow gage railway. And next day we went over the top, carrying the guns.

"I carried the tripod, another guy the barrel, and since some blighted brass hat got the brilliant idea of putting us in the second wave, of course the gun didn't arrive, the fellow with the barrel got it, so I was the only one to get there, with the tripod. Say, Slim! I spoke for fifteen minutes straight without repeating, when I found I had lost the gun, for it meant filling in all those damned indent forms. My No. 6 got over with me, bringing ammunition, so we had 'most everything except the gun. Well, when I thought of all those damned forms I had to fill in, I decided it was easier to get another machine gun, so we hunted around and couldn't find one of our own. But there were lots of Fritz's in the sugar refinery, so we went and got one, and Daddy said it was darn' lucky I did, or he would have reduced me again for losing the gun. As if it was my fault! Then the next thing I heard was I had got the V.C. So that's that. Let's have another beer."

We did, without comment, but I heard afterward that to get the gun he killed or took prisoner a whole crew of German machine gunners, and did this lone handed.

"You wanted to know about Hartley? Hartley, eh? Well—oh, hell, let's have another drink. Hey, give us a couple of doubleheaders, Canadian Club."

We waited for the order in silence. I knew now. We drank in silence.

"Well, let's hear the worst, Yank. Is he pushing up the daisies?"

"I'm sorry, Slim. Yep! Hartley's R. I. P."

I gulped, gulped again, and ordered another drink.

"Damned few of us now, Slim. And you are going back, aren't you?"

I nodded. It was my turn next. I knew, or thought I knew, I was going to certain death. Hadn't I figured it all out? Was it possible for me to escape a second time? Hadn't I done sums and sums in my head trying to figure my chances for survival? I had figured so well and so long that I knew that in the Canadians my chances were exactly zero or less, for staying six months alive, and that in every other I did stand a chance, an even break of coming out. But not so in the Canadians.

Wasn't it rumored that our casualties were in the proportion of four to one? Didn't I know that with all the bunk about getting Germans attacking troops suffer far more than defenders? And weren't the Canadians only used in attacks and to hold some desperate point? Didn't I know that even then there was a big scrap coming for the Canucks somewhere near Arras?

So again I repeated the Yank's phrase.

"Yep, I'm going back, and this time next year they will add me to the fertilizer. Let's have another drink."

He told me about Hartley.

"You know, Slim, when he left the gun that time with a message? Well, he got back all right, for an officer told me he asked him for the machine gun officer. Well, I guess he tried to get back to the gun again and got lost. At least I figure he got lost, for he was found about a hundred yards or so to the left. He had picked up a rifle somewhere, and when he met the Fritzies he got three, wounded as he was, and I guess he was off his bean. Anyway he put up one whale of a scrap by the looks of things, and finally got a bayonet in the stomach. Better have a drink, Slim."

Poor Hartley. What would I tell his people? I guess I'd better tell them something. I heard the voice of the Yank away in the distance.

"I wrote his people and told them that he died in my arms, and that he asked for his mother, so you don't need to write."

I couldn't finish my drink somehow, and made some excuse, told the Yank I would see him later, and left. I walked and walked and walked. Hadn't I been a fool? I had tried hard to avoid making up my mind irrevocably, but at last I had the courage to measure what was ahead. Let me see—two months at Hastings, two months at the Reserve, another month or less getting back to the battalion—five months, with maybe two months more before I would get it. That was seven months, seven months to live. Well, that wasn't bad, if only I could keep that imagination of mine under control.

That was it. I wasn't afraid of death, but it was my imagination that kept conjuring before me how I would die. I didn't want to get it in the face like that guy I was passing, or in the legs, but just a nice even hole, like the corporal had got. Now that wasn't bad; it was over so quick. But was it? I remembered once having a tooth pulled and, although the doctor said the nerve didn't stretch, but that he broke it off quickly, I knew better. It had seemed like eternity. Mightn't it be just the same at death? It may seem only a second to the one who is watching, but what about the poor blighter who is dying?

Why in the name of heaven was I ever

given such a realistic imagination? Many of the men I knew were considered brave, but it was only because they didn't have the brains to think. Their imagination didn't trouble them as much as a goat's. I had to drug mine. If I could only find something besides booze. Something clean and quick, that doped your brain. Then I would be like those cowlike men. Hartley was gone, a bayonet in the stomach, and I could see him lying there! Hartley was gone, and the Yank would be sent home, and I would go back, back to the blood and the mud and the torture of seeing myself get killed.

What had I done to deserve this? Oh, hell, why worry? I would go crazy this way. So I went into a pub, and the door closed on God and all His works. Oh, I was cunning enough not to pass out. But I took enough to deaden, to stupefy the brain within me that kept crying out.

TO BE CONCLUDED

FACTS AN' FIGGERS ON SHEEP

As told to

ALAN LEMAY

By

WHISKERS BECK

THAT new hand the Old Man took on last week shore looks a whole lot like a sheep; more like one than lots o' sheep do theirselves.

It come over me so sudden I kinda forgot myself an' spoke to him about it.

"Mister," I says, "you're shore the spittin' image of a sheep I used to know."

I thought fer a minute ol' Whiskers Beck was goin' to be a thing o' the past, if that feller had *his* way about it. I reckon mebbe he hadn't had that pointed out to him before. Anyway, he looked so plumb astonished that I seen I'd spilled the beans.

But he only said—

"An' you look a whole heap like the brush fence paw built out back o' the barn!"

Well, sir, d'you know, I hadn't been reminded o' that fer upwards o' three weeks an' I'd purty near forgot that angle of it. That's the way of it. A feller keeps thinkin' how funny the other boys look an' he forgets that his own pan may be kinda comical, when looked at certain ways—he bein' in a position where he doesn't see it very often hisself.

All the boys laughed an' whooped an' hollered fit to shoot, but I didn't say anythin' more. My face has been compared to everythin' from dishrags down to an' includin' the underside of a goat, but I ain't goin' to risk takin' cold fer nobody, an' I'm used to all that. Anyway, in this case, I started the argument. An' the feller looks jest as much like a sheep as he did in the first place.

I made a pass at herdin' sheep, once.

T'other day, when I made mention o' that to Squirty Wallace, he grabbed a dog by the hin' leg an' made out he was goin' to lam me with it. But he knowed darn' well that if he done such it would only mean a dead dog, an' a good bust in the eye fer Squirty Wallace.

Prob'ly I'm the only cowhand forked end still down that will admit he's tried herdin' sheep, but—what the heck? It's a free country, ain't it? I'll put a funny shape nose on the feller as says different.

It come about the time I busted my leg in them three places, that time the cow critter caught me stuck in the fence where the cayuse had throwed me, an' they made out I wasn't goin' to be up to ridin' no more. Them little things will happen, an' I ain't got no complaint. But I will say fer sheep I never see one haul off an' pitch into a man that's got stuck that way, an' I never see a sheep dog take an' throw a man into no such compromisin' position as upside down in a fence, neither.

Trouble with cows, you never get but one crop—beef. With sheep you get three crops—mutton, wool an' fleas. I dunno why fleas goes with sheep, but I'll sw'ar to it.

Some say sheep won't drink hard liquor. 'Tain't so; don't you believe 'em. I seen a sheep drink until she run crookeder than a cowhand headin' off a hen. An' her knees kind o' buckled under her as she made the turns, same as an extra bowlegged cowboy.

Mebbe I should 'a' held that pore innocent sheep back. But it wasn't *my* keg o' liquor; it belonged to some Mexican fellers. Far be it from me to butt into any Mexican feller's business.

She wasn't ever the same after that. We had to get rid of her, an' she got to be bell-wether fer a feller named Mendez. He drove his flock through Porterton once, an' this sheep turned into the first saloon, with the flock right after her. They had mutton in Porterton fer a month.

I never make mention o' them things to the boys. I'm a peacable man, an' never go out o' my way to start trouble. Sometimes other folks, though, seem to have a hankerin' that way.

I recollec' last winter that nester that lives up by the gap drove by in that rig o' his, right by in plain sight o' the bunkhouse door. An' in the back o' the rig, stickin' up like a froze nose, without even a sack throwed over it, was a little woolly lamb. You should 'a' heard the boys take on.

"What's the world comin' to?" inquires Squirty Wallace.

"The range is rooned," busts out Whack-Ear Banks. "We're done fer, unless somethin' is did, an' did now!"

"Git that varmint!" yells Dixie Kane, an' rushes inside fer his gun.

"It's jest one lamb," I puts in, not honin' to see trouble.

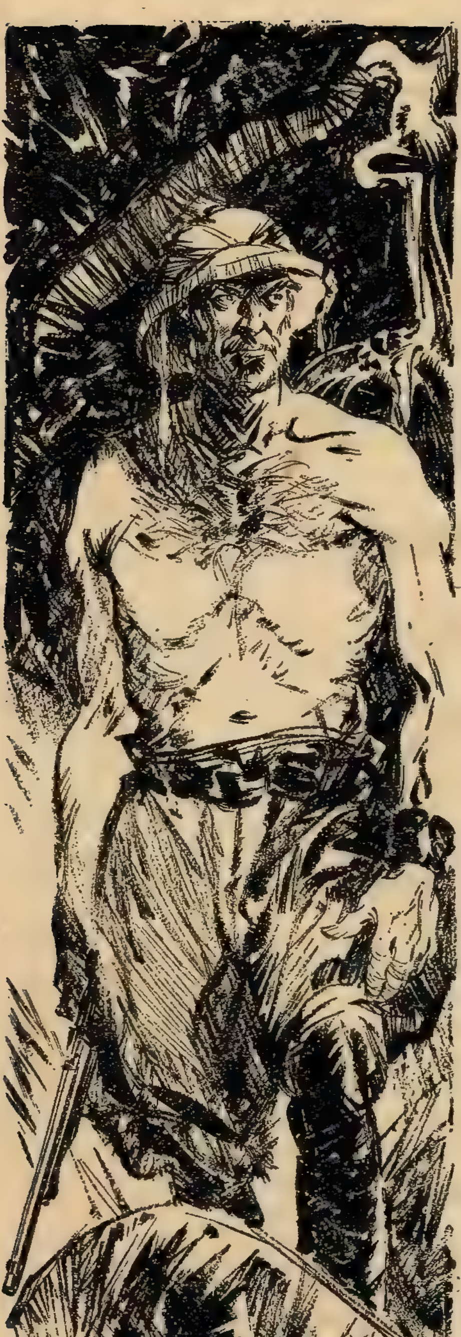
"Jest one lamb!" Whack-Ear Banks comes back. "Jest one lamb, he says! Mister," he says, "that lamb will grow up, an' give birth t' a litter o' six-eight whelps, an' they'll grow up an' have more an' they'll overrun this range until nothin' is left standin', an' it'll be too late to do nothin'. Nothin'," he says, "unless it's ride fer our lives. Gimme rope. I ain't gonna stand by an' leave that happen!"

"Anybody," says Squirty Wallace, "that has anythin' t' do with sheep, here or any place else, should be treat' like the poison he is. An' as fer bringin' a sheep on *this* range, the feller's got to be hung, an' hangin's too good! Boys, our backs is to the wall—they's a lamb on the range! That nester is due fer a necktie party, an' his starvin' fambly o' six ain't goin' to save him this time!"

Well, I didn't say anythin'. Prob'ly the boys was right about that lamb, at that. Anyway, I rode after the nester, an' bought the lamb, an' we et it.

So they didn't hang the nester, like they said.

I noticed one funny thing, though. All three o' them boys was wearin' sheepskin coats.



The BOND *of* BULLY HAINES

By

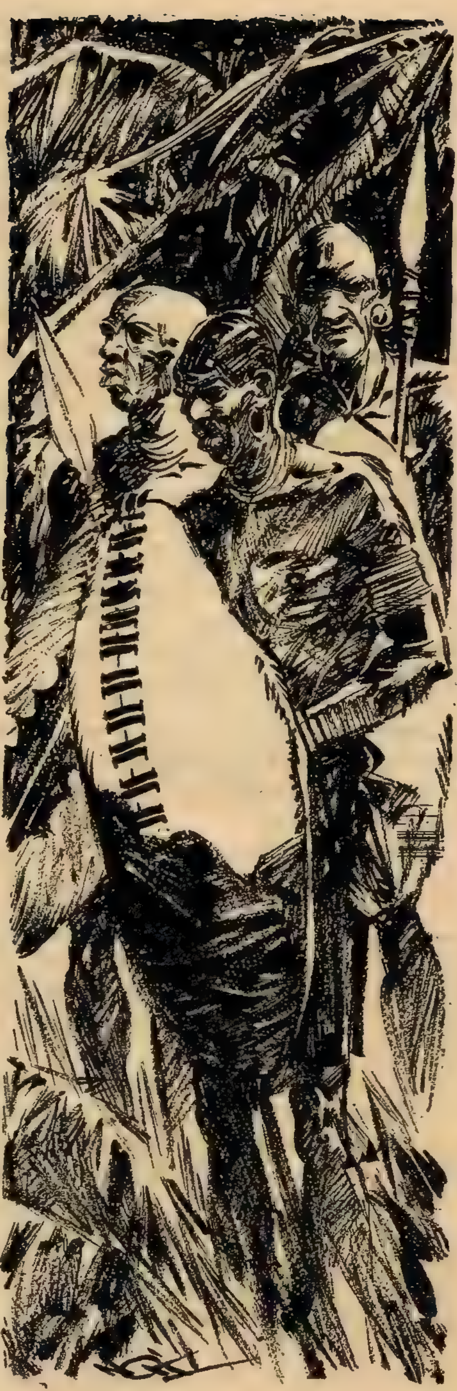
L. PATRICK GREENE

GIVE a dog a bad name—and hang him. Maybe. And again, maybe not. But it's sure enough that Bully Haines—Bloody Haines he was called more often than not—had a bad name and deserved it. And it's sure enough I did my damnedest to bring Bully Haines to the proper end of all cold blooded murderers.

I've already written an official report of the case. I'm telling this to you because it ain't possible to open out in official reports. It ain't possible to say anything but stark, unrelieved facts between "Sir, I have the honor to report" and "Sir, I have the honor to be, Your obedient servant, James Joyce, Sergeant."

Not but what I'm saying here ain't

A Story of Slave Running in the Wilds of Rhodesia



facts. Only—well, I can spread myself a bit. (Not too much, even if they do call me Windy! A nickname I can prove to you, if I had time, ain't deserved.) Anyway, I can tell things here about Bully Haines I learned before I was put on the case. An' I can include a lot which don't belong to an official report written by a sergeant of the Mounted to his commanding officer.

An' besides, I reckon it's only justice that this should be said.

Windy? Maybe, I am. But I got a touch of fever, an' the moonlight's bright as day, an' the niggers are beating their blasted tom-toms. That gets into a man's blood; makes him see things which, maybe, ain't so. Makes him see a hero where there's only a ruddy murderer.

It was at Lourenço Marques I first met Bully Haines. At Greek Sam's place. And whatever Lourenço Marques is now, in them days it was a cesspool. And Greek Sam's! Hell! Yes, that describes it. A lowdown, sordid sort of hell. Even the parrots Greek Sam kept had a line of talk which'd sicken any healthy minded man. It did me. But I thought that was because I was young an' new to the country, an' because my belly was full of the rotgut gin Greek Sam sold at champagne prices.

Sure, I was young an' just arrived in the country from the States. Arizona! An' why I left there's nobody's business. At any rate my conscience is clear about it. I've only got one regret an' that's that I wasn't such a good workman in them days. I needed two shots to finish the job an' before I got in my second he plugged me. That's why my nose ain't as pretty as nature intended.

Well, here I was in Greek Sam's sicker'n hell, enjoying life! The place was full of the scum of the world. Men of every nationality, half breeds and quarter breeds.

An' the women!

What's the good of describing them or the place. You can duplicate them and it at any big port—not perhaps quite so utterly vicious. But the same atmosphere. An' say—if you took all the whiteness from all the souls there you wouldn't have had enough to make one clean enough to get past Peter at the Gate.

There was one woman. Young in years. As old as hell in her vice. That was something I found out afterward. Yellow Rose they called her. She was a mixture of white, nigger and chink. And that mixture had made a beautiful woman. You'll have to believe that; it was so. Like a rare orchid, that's what she was. An' say, if you look close at orchids they lose a lot of their beauty. Ain't it the truth? Yellow Rose was like that, too. Only I didn't look close. I was young.

An' I thought all the virtues of the three races which made her were hers.

An' I made eyes at her an'—I was chucking money about—she left the greasy looking dago she'd been sitting with an' came an' perched on my knee.

The dago looked ugly. But I laughed at that. He said a lot that I couldn't understand, and I picked Rose up in my arms and carried her to a corner of the room. I thought we'd be quieter there.

As I passed the dago he put out his foot, trying to trip me. I shifted Rose to my left arm; my right fist smashed against the dago's nose. That finished him. I laughed at the blood which spurted over his dirty shirt.

I ordered drinks for Rose and me. When they came she put her lips to her glass, then gave it to me, turning it round so's I'd drink where her lips had touched. Man, I'd have drained that glass even if I'd have known it was full to the brim with rat poison.

Then the lights went out—all of a sudden it seemed—an' so did I.

I came to slowly an hour or two later, as I reckon. Greek Sam's place was not quite so crowded. Somebody was banging out a waltz tune on the piano. Several couples were dancing.

My head ached, my tongue felt like a bit of blotting paper. I tried to stand and fell across the table. Nobody took any notice of me. Only somebody laughed. It was Yellow Rose. She was sitting again with the dago whose nose I'd smashed.

I grinned at her. I didn't blame her for what she'd done to me. I reckoned she'd been made to do it. I felt in my pockets. They were empty. Not a cent left. The roll I had in a belt under my shirt, that had gone too. An' still I didn't care about anything but the girl. I figured that she'd got my money—I'd have given it to her if she'd asked for it—and she'd got to give value for cash received. I meant to collect.

I got to my feet and staggered over to where they were sitting an' stood swaying before them.

"Well, senhor?" the dago asks, sneering.

"Hell!" says I. "You get out of here before I slap you again." And, "Rose," I says, "you're coming with me, ain't you?"

She laughed.

"But you have no money, senhor. Or—or have you?"

"Sure," I lied. "Plenty. You come along with me an' we'll get it."

"No, senhor, you go for the money. I will wait here for it—and you."

I grabbed at her hand, meaning to haul her to her feet and carry her out of the place, out into the sunshine. She dodged. Quick as a snake she drew her knife an' struck. The blade snicked along the back of my hand, cutting to the bone. And before I could recover she urged the dago on me.

I had no chance. He was as big as me, an' his head was clear. At that I made him gasp when I buried my left into his fat belly. My head's thick, but the dago hit me with a bottle and I went down and out.

I WAS young—and green. That was why I recovered so quick, maybe. At least I opened my eyes and took a sort of interest in what was happening, if you know what I mean.

A couple of cockney firemen had carried me back to the table in the corner of the room. A bleary eyed looking waster they called Doc was bandaging my hand, doing it proper, too, an' telling me that by rights my brains ought to be all over the place—I reckon they were, but not in the way he meant—an' I ought to thank my parents for giving me the brain box of a jackass. In his way he was an insulting old devil. But I knew he meant well an' I was feeling too sick to resent anything that way.

But I was still eager to get Yellow Rose—funny, now I look back on it—and I wanted to have it out with the dago. The two cockneys were all for letting me have my own way.

"Let the bleedin' fool go to it," one of them said. "It ain't our haffair."

"Yus!" the other agreed. "An' then 'hus'll clean up the mess afterwards."

And even Doc sort of lost patience with me.

"Twice today, Yank," he said, "you've escaped death because God gave you a strong stomach and a thick skull. Don't go tempting Fate again. Not unless you've got a hide that'll turn the edge of Yellow Rose's knife. And judging by your hand, you haven't."

And so I sat there, glowering across the smoke laden room at Yellow Rose. An' gradually my sight cleared. Maybe I got suddenly older. Leastways, she didn't look as attractive as before. An' this life I had been kidding myself I was enjoying—it seemed all of a piece with the foul atmosphere. Stale tobacco fumes, an out of tune piano, strident voiced women singing bawdy songs, men drinking and quarreling. An' the parrots screaming at the top of their voices.

I'd had enough. I was ready to quit.

"I'm sick of this," I said as I got to my feet. "I'm going out."

"You're showing sense," said Doc, kind of sad-like. "That's what I ought to have done years ago. It's too late now. Well, out you go, and don't come back."

The two cockneys gave me a hand, but I couldn't make it. I must have lost a lot of blood. The room spun round.

"Leave me sit awhile," I says, "till I get a bit of strength back. I walked in here and I'm goin' to walk out unaided."

They left me at that, the cockneys did—reckon they thought me an obstinate fool—but the Doc stayed by me. We sat down at a table together.

And then the door opened.

You'd have thought, the way things happened, that that dirty crowd in Greek Sam's place were a lot of night creatures scared of the sunlight. The chap who was playing the piano let his hands fall on the keys, making a tuneless crash; singing stopped, the dancers dodged out of the beam of sunlight that cut the stinking, smoke filled air and stood sort of cowed-like against the wall. Them at the bar an' behind it didn't move, didn't speak.

That's what struck me so funny. One minute noisy, the next, just as soon as the door opened an' let in the sunlight, quiet. You could have heard a pin drop.

I remember one of the parrots got off a

line that ain't fit to be written here. Other times everybody'd have laughed an' maybe somebody'd have given the bird a bit of banana. Nothing like that happened this time. The parrot started to repeat what it'd said, but finished up with a frightened squawk.

Yellow Rose and the dago, they hadn't moved. They were sitting at their table in the middle of the room. An' their eyes were wide open, staring into the sunshine. And, man, they were trembling with fear.

Funny, I thought. Funny they should be so scared of a bit of sunshine.

You see, what with the knockout drops an' the crack on the head, my brain wasn't working as well as it ought. And I was sitting alongside the wall, to the left of the open door. All I knew anything about was that shaft of sunlight streaming into the dirty den.

An' then, slow-like, it came to me that somebody must have opened that door, and that Yellow Rose an' the rest were frightened of that somebody, not of the sunlight.

I wanted to see who that somebody was. I reckoned him and me ought to be pals. So I tried to get up again, but the Doc held me back.

"Sit still, you fool," he whispered. "Don't butt into another man's business."

"Good Lord!" I shouted. "Are we to sit here like dummies until somebody remembers it ain't manners to leave a door open?"

And then I heard Bully Haines speak for the first time. Sure, it was him outside. Not that I knew at the time. An' I couldn't see him.

"I'm coming in," he says, and his voice made me think of a rasp grating across a piece of steel. It set my teeth on edge. "I'm coming in, but I'm leaving the door open. So if any of you rats want to run—run, blast you!"

I laughed the way some of 'em scurried out of sight. Yellow Rose and the dago started to go too.

"No, you stay!" said the voice, and they dropped back into their chairs, gasping with fright.

I saw Yellow Rose's hand go to her belt. Quick as a flash her hand jerked an' I saw her knife go hurtling along the beam of sunlight. I heard it fall with a clatter on the ground outside. I heard a laugh. The knife came back, like as if the sunlight outside had no use for such stuff, an' stuck quivering in the table between Yellow Rose an' the dago.

Then Bully Haines came into the room. Me, I ain't exactly a runt. I stand near six foot an' I'm heavy enough to feel like begging the pardon of any horse I fork—I wasn't so thick then, though—but I was small stuff beside Bully Haines.

I'll never forget him. But at that I'd be hard put to it to give a proper description that could be used in a police circular. His helmet covered his eyes, but somehow I knew they was blue, tempered steel blue; an' a thick black beard covered his face. His waist was slim an' his chest'd come near busting the tape at forty-eight. His back muscles made him look sort of round shouldered, an' he walked with a tread as soft an' graceful as a cat's.

That's a hell of a description for a police officer to give, but if you look at the police circulars offering rewards for the apprehension of Bully Haines, you'll see as nobody's done much better.

WELL, he comes into the room an' comes to a halt at the table where Yellow Rose and the dago are sitting. I see then his clothes are torn and covered with slime, his hands are bleeding. He says to them:

"I've just escaped from the Black Hell—" an' that was one of the stinking cells in the fort—"and I'm on my way to—well, that's of no interest to you. And I'm in a hurry. But I had to see you first. I have a reputation. I always keep my word. You have heard of that, of course? I said I would mark the woman and kill the man who sold me out to the rats of police who crawl about this hole. And you, Rose, you doped my drink. You, Pedro, helped her an' went for the police. Well, have you anything to say?"

They didn't answer. They couldn't answer. Have you ever seen a rabbit hypnotized by a snake? Them two were like that. They stared at him. They gaped. Their lips moved, but they didn't say anything.

And then he reached out his left hand and grabbed Yellow Rose by the hair. He yanked her to her feet. His right hand swung back.

And then—she was a woman, wasn't she?—I yells:

"Hi! Stop that, you—"

If I'd had a gun I'd have plugged him.

The Doc told me to shut up.

"Whatever he does to her," Doc said, "won't be half what she deserves."

And when I got to my feet he tried to hold me back. I shook off the Doc's hand and lurched over to Bully Haines. I caught hold of his right hand.

"You can't do that!" I said.

He says, an' his voice was as final as a judge's:

"I've passed my word. Who are you to try to turn me?"

And all in one movement he frees himself and sends me skittering across the room. My jaw aches now when I think of the force he put behind that blow. I collapsed over the table where the Doc sat waiting for me.

"You're lucky, Yank," he said. "That's three times today you've fooled with death. Now watch; and remember a thing like Yellow Rose isn't a woman. She's going to pay now. Not in full—but a little."

An' I watched. There was nothing else I could do. If I shut my eyes I heard her screams, an' that was worse than seeing what caused them. I couldn't do anything to stop it. I couldn't break away from the Doc's hold. I was as weak as that.

Bully Haines kept his word. He *marked* Yellow Rose. How he marked her! After he'd finished it was a sure thing her beauty wasn't going to snare any more young fools like me. He dropped her an' she crawled along the floor to the bar counter; she passed behind it to one of the back rooms. An' not a soul moved to go to her aid.

"He's operated scientifically," the Doc said coldly, an' there was hate in his voice.

I wondered if Yellow Rose had been responsible for him being what he was. I didn't ask him. I was watching Bully Haines. He pulled the dago to his feet.

"Now you, Pedro," he said quietly.

The dago stammered something, begged for mercy.

Haines laughed.

"Mercy! Funny word to come from your lips." He paused a moment, considering. Then he says, "Well, you shall have a fighting chance, more than you gave me."

An' he took up Yellow Rose's knife. He stepped back a pace, blocking the way to the open door.

"Get your knife. If you can win your way out you can go for all of me."

The dago pulled his knife and made a dive for the door, slashing at Haines as he passed.

I said Haines walked as quiet as a cat, didn't I? He moved then as quick as one.

Somehow he parried the dago's thrust; somehow he shifted so that his bulk still blocked the way to the door.

Somewhere outside a big gun boomed; and a bell tolled. I heard revolver shots.

But all that didn't mean anything to me. I reckon it meant nothing to anybody there. I reckon they didn't hear. They was watching the fight. An' believe me it was worth watching. I'd always got the idea that knife play was a dirty way of fighting; I'd never looked on it as white man's stuff. I reckon different now.

It's a man's way of fighting if, so be, the fight's got to be a finish fight. It takes guts an' skill to face a man with a knife.

These two put up a fight that was crammed with action. The dago was an experienced knife fighter an' he fought with the courage of a cornered sewer rat. An' he had tricks which made Bully Haines seem slow at times. Slow, but almighty sure.

The dago's knife flashed about him; new rents showed in his clothes; blood spurted from a lot of cuts. But Bully Haines wasn't extending himself—you could see that. An' the dago saw it too. He was dripping with sweat; his eyes bulged. They looked like they was fit to drop out of their sockets. An' Bully Haines—he looked to be smiling. Anyway, his lips were parted an' you could see his white teeth; he wasn't hardly breathing.

I heard revolver shots again an' the sound of men running. I reckon Bully Haines heard it too, 'cause he said, easy-like as if he was about to leave a party:

"I've got to go. Sorry to have to finish this so quickly."

Then he made a feint, aiming low down. The dago moved quick to parry and Bully Haines tossed his knife to his left hand. His arm straightened, and the dago straightened up, gurgling; he dropped his knife and his two hands closed on the haft of the knife which was sticking between his ribs.

THERE was more revolver shots, just outside the door now, and as Pedro slumped to the floor four or five dago police entered—little, big mustached men who carried swords and fired revolvers just as if they were kids playing fireworks. Just as if noise made up for their lack of guts.

They were funny in their musical comedy getup.

Laugh! I laughed fit to bust myself. I forgot all about the marking of Yellow Rose; I forgot all about the dead man on the floor. An' say, the way he was lying on his back, his hands clasped on the haft of the knife which killed him, made you think he'd died peaceful-like, saying his prayers.

"Shut up," the Doc said irritably.

I reckon he was afraid the dago police'd pinch him because he was with me and I was laughing at 'em. But I shut up, like he said. I felt sort of sheepish. No one else was making any noise but me.

Bully Haines was standing with his legs wide apart, a bloody knife in his hand, Pedro at his feet; the dago police huddled together, trying to look fierce an' full of courage. And round the room were the scum of Lourenço Marques. An' all quiet; all watching Bully Haines.

One of the police got pushed in front of his fellers. He was the captain, I reckon. He flourished his sword in his right hand; with his left he twirled the end of his long waxed mustache. He made me think of a mamma's pet playing pirate captain an' scared to death of his rôle.

He said in a voice loud enough to hide the quiver:

"I arrest you, Senhor Bloody Haines —" then stopped. I reckon he needed a prompter.

Bully Haines laughed at him.

"You'll never take me alive," he said. "You'll never take me back to that Black Hell."

The dago captain bowed, clicking his heels. Words—he had plenty of courage for words.

"We are going to do exactly that, Senhor Bloody Haines," he said. "That is the order of our illustrious governor. And I promise you you will not escape a second time."

"Ah! Well, here I am; come and get me."

Haines gave his invitation most polite. But they didn't take him up. They whispered together. One wanted to shoot him. But he was overruled. Shooting, I gathered, was too good for Bully Haines. Torture, the Black Hell, that was what they wanted to take him alive for.

"What's he done? What laws has he broke?" I whispers to the Doc, who laughs.

"What hasn't he done? What laws hasn't he broke? Why, Yank boy, there's only one law he has kept."

"An' that?" I prompted.

"His word. He's never been known to go back on that."

"He must be a real white man, then," I said, thinking of the men of the West I'd known—square, honest, law abiding men whose word was their bond. But Doc looked at me queerly. And he said:

"It all depends, doesn't it, on what sort of word he gives? But he said he'd mark Yellow Rose. He said he'd kill Pedro.

And he did. He's utterly amoral, Yank, if you know what that means. And, if you're wise, you'll never get in his path. If you ever meet him on a narrow path with quicksands of death on either side, jump into 'em, or turn round and run. Don't trust to the mercy of Bully Haines. He—"

"I am waiting!" Bully Haines' voice cut in on the Doc's.

The dago captain answered:

"Why not surrender, senhor? You can not stand against us. We are seven; you are only one."

"But what a one," I thought.

And Haines said:

"You underestimate your numbers. You are eight."

"You mean?" the dago questioned wonderingly.

"This! I told you I'd make you a present of him. Here he is."

An' as he spoke Haines stooped swiftly and took Pedro up in his arms. I've said Pedro was a big man, but Haines handled him as easy as I'd handle a two year old.

"Take him!" he said, and threw the dead body straight at the dago captain.

It bowled the little runt over, sent him reeling back into the men who stood behind him. Three or four of 'em went down and for a little while there was a fear born scramble—arms and legs waving about, and funny dago curses, and revolvers going off aimlessly.

I started to laugh again. Man, it was funny. It seemed as if it couldn't be real at all.

An' the next thing I knew Haines had reached down and picked up the dago captain off the floor. He picked him up with one hand and held him by his belt, dangling face downward. For a moment I felt sorry for that dago. I didn't see how he could have any self-respect left after that—an' after what came next.

For Bully Haines put him across his knee and spanked him on the buttocks with the palm of his hand. Hard. And he counted out loud. Up to fifty, he counted. But long before then the dago's curses changed to shouts for mercy, from shouts to tears which ended in a sort of muffled sobbing. And the others looked on. They daren't do anything. And me, I squirmed in my chair. At last I stood up. It seemed like I'd never be able to sit down in comfort again. Felt a sort of sympathetic pain, if you know what I mean.

"Fifty!" said Bully Haines, and threw the dago over his shoulder so that he hung down his back, holding him by the wrists. "Fifty lashes they gave me—fifty of a sort I've returned."

"He swore he would," the Doc muttered.

"And now I'm going," finished Bully Haines. "Out of my way!"

And he strode toward the open door. I thought the dagos were going to make a stand but their courage failed 'em. They was a gutless crowd anyway. They parted and let him through. I reckon they thought of knifing him in the back as he passed, but the dago captain hung there, kicking an' squirming. He made a good shield.

There was no hurry about Bully Haines, no emotion of any sort as far as I could see. Funny that, come to think of it. In that short time, fifteen minutes at the most, I reckon, he'd made his entrance, marked a woman, killed a man, thrashed another an' was now making his escape from the police sent to arrest him. You'd have thought his face'd have shown something. But take it from me it didn't! 'Course I couldn't see his eyes, an' his beard covered the muscles of his face. But I could see his lips an' all I can say is if I saw a feller asleep as relaxed as Bully Haines was then I'd say he had a clean conscience, sure enough.

IT'S FUNNY, now I think of it, that I didn't twig what the dago police was doing until Bully Haines had near as not got to the door. Maybe not so funny, though, come to think of it. Me, I only had eyes for Bully Haines. He held the interest; the eye couldn't take in anything else when he was about.

And what was true of me was true of the others in that place. Must have been something like that, else somebody'd have done something, or said something that'd have tipped the rest of us off as to what was happening.

Well, there you are. Suddenly I'm aware that two of the dago police are crawling on hands and knees after Bully Haines. When I first twigged their game they were almost in striking distance. They'd got knives in their hands—not military equipment but carvers they kept, I reckon, for private affairs—and their game was (funny how it came to me with a rush) to hamstring Bully Haines.

Two sharp hacking blows would sever the tendons back of his knees and he'd be as helpless as a new born brat. He'd topple like a felled tree. I've seen elephants hamstrung by nigger hunters. An' they couldn't do anything after; the niggers were able to finish 'em as they pleased an' at their leisure.

Something like that was going to happen to Bully Haines. Say, I couldn't sit there an' see that happen. Maybe there ain't no justification for what I did. Well, what of it? I ain't looking for justification; not in this world anyway. Maybe Bully Haines was a murderer, an' all the things I've since learnt about him, an' deserved what looked like coming to him. Maybe, I say. But I didn't stop to consider anything like that. He was, as I saw it then, a white man, an' white men have got to stick together. So I yelled—

"Watch out behind you, Haines," an' at the same time made a dive for the crawling dago nearest me.

My weight dropping on him like that sent the wind out of him; he grunted like a stuck pig. But, at that, he managed to prick me once in the thigh with his throat slitter.

I don't know as I can give much of an account of the rest of the fracas. My view of it was a worm's eye view, if you know what I mean.

But the dago made a swipe at Haines with his knife just as I yelled; and Haines dropped the little dago captain—an' the captain got the knife that was meant for Haines.

Then there was a bit of a free-for-all in which I took a bit of a part. You see, I was handicapped, sort of. I only had my fists, and my head was heavy. But Bully Haines! He helped himself to the captain's sword and revolver. And he knew how to handle both, take it from me.

An' then, sort of suddenly, I found myself standing by Bully Haines' side in the doorway. An' everything was very still. But the room looked as if hell had been stirring there—tables an' chairs an' dead men littering the floor, and the live 'uns, huddled together like sheep, staring at Bully Haines. I reckon they didn't see me at all. Bully Haines spoke to 'em.

"I'm going now," he said. "And you'll stay here. I'll kill the man who tries to follow me."

If he'd have spoken to me that way I reckon the Judgment Day trumpet wouldn't have stirred me. He glared at 'em for a moment. Then he laughed and took a step backward into the street, dragging me with him. An' he slammed the door to.

I reckon that door banging must have sounded like sweet music to the rats in Greek Sam's. Once again they was left to their filth. What'd passed meant no never mind to them; not to the live ones. Already somebody was pounding out a tune on the piano. They was happy. The closed door shut out Bully Haines and the sunlight.

I looked up at Bully Haines; maybe—I was young, I tell you—there was hero worship in my eyes, and I said—

"Well, Bully, where do we go from here?"

Me, I had an idea that him an' me ought to pal up together. I had ideas of us two going into partnership. I reckoned together we could lick creation. So—

"Where do we go from here?" I said again.

And he looked at me, his eyes as hard as granite.

"I suppose," he said slowly, "you think

you saved my life in there and because of that have a claim on my gratitude."

"To hell with you," I stammered, "if that's the way you feel. I'm not looking for gratitude." I was beginning to wish I'd let the dagos get him.

He answered:

"I knew they were crawling behind me. And I was ready to handle 'em. Your butting in only interfered with my plans, made things a bit more difficult."

The way he talked made me feel like a fool.

"And I don't like anybody butting into my game. I play a lone hand, in my own way. And anybody who gets in the way—" he snapped his fingers. An' that was no empty gesture. It spelt death.

He went on:

"But you're young, so I can forget a lot. An' I'll remember what you did in there. I'll give you credit for saving my life—your intentions were good. So you can consider I'm in your debt to that extent. A life for a life. And I pay all debts that I acknowledge.

"Now, if you're wise, you'll lose no time getting out of this *dorp*; out of this territory. There's a ship sailing south on the noon tide. The *Mary Jane*. Go to her captain, tell him Bully Haines sent you. He'll take care of you. And I hope to God you never cross my path again."

He nodded curtly, turned on his heels and left me flat. I stared after him. I was sort of dazed. Reckon, too, I sensed a fear of Fate in his last words.

He cut down one of the side streets and vanished.

And still I stood there; most near to bawling like a kid. It hurts, when you're young, to offer friendship an' have it refused. I came near to hating Bully Haines. How long I stood there gaping I don't know. But suddenly I remembered that I'd helped a murderer escape from the police an' that Lourenço Marques wasn't what you'd call a haven of refuge for me. No, not exactly. An' I took to my heels an' ran like hell for the docks.

II

I DID a lot of wandering, got older and learnt a lot of things before I landed up in Rhodesia and joined the police. It seems funny now, me in the police. An' a sergeant at that. An' what haven't I done whilst knocking about this dump called Africa? Big game hunting, ivory poaching, labor recruiting, prospecting and a bit of I.D.B.* on the side. Them are the big things a man remembers when he gets older. Them are the things he wraps up with romance and tells the yarn to youngsters, giving them the travel itch. An' if you travel much in Africa you get the itch, all right. But them are the things a man forgets. Maybe it's just as well. No sense in remembering hardships. But it's the hardships that teach a man, if he's teachable. An' it was hardships that taught me Africa. I reckon I was a good scholar. A lot of things came easy to me. There ain't many nigger dialects I can't speak; an' I know the niggers—an' like 'em. They can teach a white man a lot if he's willing to learn. An' I was. Say, I lived at one *kraal* for two years. Maybe I'd be there yet, except a blasted Limey, a dirty little rat of a traveling storekeeper, called me a white Kaffir; a squaw man, if you know what I mean. An' I wasn't. I was learning life an' enjoying it. But that hurt, being called a name like that. An' I left the *kraal*, left the district, too. I had to, anyway, after what I done to that dirty mouthed little trader.

But all that's no never mind. Take it from me that, as a member of this Rhodesian Mounted Police Corps, I was, when I joined, better equipped than most for the job. An' I earned my stripes. It took me a long time to get 'em, though. You see, I ain't exactly good at drills; an' I don't ride a horse the military way.

But all this is getting nowhere an' the moon's dropping; an' I'm beginning to shake a bit. Blast Africa, an' the fever.

About Bully Haines.

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* Illicit diamond buying.

'Course I kept hearing about him at odd times. Not that I believed half the yarns they spread about him. Being human, he couldn't have done 'em all.

If you swallowed all the yarns they told: One week he was up in the Congo; the next down in Natal. One day he'd be at Beira; the next raising hell in German East. But the true yarns—an' it was possible to check up in some cases—told enough to damn the man in the eyes of the most merciful saint. I reckon that Bully Haines, in his wanderings, had left a trail of blood up and down, across and back the whole of this sun blasted continent.

Nigger labor recruiting he did most of the time. Labor recruiting! Call it that if you're squeamish minded an' got a fear of the government. But me, I'm mincing no bones. Slavery I call it. Slavery. An' the recruiter's a slaver. Exceptions, of course. I've known recruiters who give their niggers a square deal. I know mines where the niggers are treated damned well. But it's the system that's wrong. A system must be wrong which lets loose a man like Bully Haines—let alone the fact that the nigger wasn't meant by nature to work out his guts under ground, out of the sunlight.

And Bully Haines, he went up an' down, back an' forth, as I said, recruiting labor —slave dealing. An' he was ruthless. He let nothing stand in his path. He shot an' flogged; he burnt down *kraals*.

The police of four territories were after him. English, German, Portuguese and Belgian.

But they wouldn't cooperate, an' he was as clever as hell. *Slim!* as the Boers say. That's what he was. He slipped out of their traps again an' again. He was helped, too, as far as our crowd went, because the fellers who were sent after him were bent on doing things as set down in the regulations. They wanted to put a hand on his shoulder an' say, "I arrest you," an' all that. An' that ain't noways easy to do when a man won't stand still whilst you're making your little speech. It's damned hard to do when he reaches for his gun and plugs you. A man can't say much, or do much, when blood from a punctured lung comes bubbling out between his lips.

An' that was Bully Haines' way. He wouldn't submit to arrest like a man ought; like these English—they're a law-abiding folk—think he ought. No. Bully Haines shot his way out of trouble.

It was only a month ago when word came to me at my out-station that Bully Haines was in my district, recruiting labor an' raising hell generally.

Two of my men had come across him when they were on patrol. They thought they had him easy. But they didn't know Bully Haines. He plugged 'em both as they rode up to arrest him.

I got that from a native who saw it all. He, this native, was hiding up a tree, out of Bully Haines' way.

He said Bully Haines didn't give em' a chance to speak or do anything. As soon as they hove in sight he leveled his rifle at 'em an' fired. Two shots—an' two dead men. Fine lads they were.

SEEMS now that I can find excuses for Bully Haines. If he looks hard enough, a man can find excuses for the devil. But Bully Haines was a wanted man; a price on his head. In a way you can call his shooting an act of self-preservation. His life or theirs. An', looking at it that way—

But they were two fine lads; good natured, laughing youngsters. I saw red. Maybe I had a bit of fever; it's most always with me nowadays. It don't bother me none. I've got used to it. But maybe it affects me in some way that ain't exactly obvious. Maybe that's why I did things like I was a play actor on the stage, a-spouting my lines. Maybe that's why I swore I'd get Bully Haines even if I had to follow him to hell—and I did, near most. Maybe that's why I forgot all about the rules and regulations; forgot I was a policeman, a sergeant in charge of an out-station.

Maybe that's why I went off alone. And I didn't wear a uniform neither.

And I only took my revolver, loaded in every chamber. Nothing else; no grub—nothing. That was part of the oath I swore, to get Bully Haines. Six shots I allowed myself, no more. An' I was goin' to eat off the country—or not at all—until I got him. I aimed on traveling light an' fast.

I reckon I had fever, sure enough. Wouldn't have acted that way, else. Come to think of it, though, I don't know as I could have done things better. Bully Haines wouldn't look for trouble from a sundowner, an' that's what I aimed on looking like. I'd be able to get close to him, I figured. Close enough to get in a shot. I didn't intend to do no arresting. Nothing like that, you can bet your life. I meant to shoot on sight, and one shot'd be sufficient. I knew my gun.

An' so I set off, riding a raw boned mare belonging to the native commissioner. My district was in the fly belt and us police had to ride mules. But the commissioner's mare was "salted"—so I took her. Not afore I'd had a few words with the commissioner, though. And I reckon I haven't heard the last of that yet. No, not by a long shot. You see I had to persuade him to let me have the mare an' my methods wasn't over gentle.

Well, there you are.

I set off on the trail of Bully Haines, picking it up two days after I'd left my camp, at the place where he'd shot my two troopers.

Maybe I wasted a bit of time there, covering up the bones of them two lads and collecting letters an' such from their tunic pockets to send to their folk. Reckon I'm getting soft. There was no sense in doing them things. I ought to have let the dead lie and got after the one who killed 'em.

There was a *kraal* nearby. There *was* a *kraal*. Bully Haines had left some blackened ruins. That's all. An' the niggers who hung about, they was too dazed-like to tell me anything that helped. I wanted to know, for instance, how many men Bully Haines had with him an' things like that. But they, poor devils, could only tell me how many he'd killed. I wanted to know where he was heading for; but they only knew he was gone and they didn't seem to comprehend anything else. Poor devils!

I got some grub of a sort from them, an' drank a quart or so of beer they'd saved, an' followed Bully Haines.

I didn't need any guide. He'd left a broad trail, an' a bloody one.

Say, he was traveling fast with his labor recruits. The spoor told that. His halts had been short ones. He didn't stop long enough to light cook fires except only at the night camps. He was traveling fast an' he had, I reckoned, a week's start on me. But he was on foot—at least his niggers were—an' making no more, at the most, than three miles an hour. Well, give him ten hours of trekking a day; thirty miles a day. That, as I reckoned it, gave him a lead of two hundred and ten miles. It was a big lead. But, in Africa, not so big. And by next morning's sunrise I found he wasn't so far ahead as I'd guessed.

A nigger he'd dropped told me that. That was about all the nigger could tell me afore he died. The poor devil's back had been marked with a *sjambok.* I reckoned Bully Haines didn't think of niggers as people. He couldn't have done things that way, else.

Cutting the tale of the things that don't matter short— Who cares, an' what does it matter, about the tough going I had? Hungry, tired, I couldn't sleep nights. There was lions and I daren't light a fire. An' I lost my horse—a crocodile took her; its mate nearly took me. I had to use one of my six shots before the brute'd let go of my leg—crossing a river. She was a good mare. An' then—but I'm omitting all that. It don't really matter.

This is what does:

I caught up with Bully Haines about noon of the fifth day. At least I could see his camp. And it looked as if it was a permanent camp. At first I couldn't understand it.

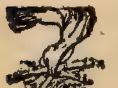
Then, sudden sort of, I knew. He was in Portuguese territory, out of my jurisdiction. Sure. He could afford to thumb his nose at anybody who might be following him because of what he'd done back in my district.

Funny things, international boundaries. Some of 'em are nothing more than an imaginary line drawn from one beacon to another, but it matters a hell of a lot which side of that line a man is.

But this boundary line—nothing imaginary about it. It was a river, a wide one an' in full flood. I reckon Haines an' his crowd must have crossed before the floods came down.

If I'd have acted according to regulations I'd have gone back an' reported that Bully Haines had escaped to Portuguese territory, and them that do such things'd have applied for extradition papers an' God knows what all. But me, I only know one extradition warrant. An' that's a bullet. That's unanswerable. An' that's what I meant for Bully Haines.

I was under cover of some thorn bush which edged the river bank just opposite Bully Haines' camp. An' for a time I just stayed doggo, getting the lay of the land.



BULLY HAINES looked like staying a long time where he was. I could see his niggers—they carried guns an' *sjamboks*—bossing the labor recruits. They was building a stockade of thorn bush; some were digging trenches.

It puzzled me more than a bit. I didn't get what they was up to. I ought to have had a look see at the veld way beyond Bully Haines' camp. I might have seen something that'd have put me wise. But you never know. It's hard to see a nigger in the woodpile, 'specially if the nigger don't want to be seen.

Still that ain't to the point. I'm saying I could see into Bully Haines' camp an' knew what he was doing. An' as I lay there I made my plans. I knew what I was going to do an' how to do it. But I'd got to wait awhile. Got to wait till darkness came on before I could make a start.

An' so I kept where I was, staring over the river.

I saw Bully Haines come out of his tent. He was dressed in white ducks an' when he walked about amongst his niggers he made an easy mark.

Believe me, I cursed because I hadn't brought a rifle. An' he was way out of revolver range.

It was hot there under the bush. An' I was near mad with thirst listening to the river gurgling down below. An' I didn't dare move. An' the blasted thorns kept pricking me.

But the time passed.

I reckon I slept at times, but mostly I stared into the camp of Bully Haines; watching his niggers working; hearing their songs an' their yells, an' the whacking of *sjamboks* on naked flesh!

But at last the sun set; darkness dropped over the veld. Black as pitch it was except over the river, at the camp, where big fires made splashes of yellow and crimson against the night's curtain. An' the niggers were still working, still singing, still yelling with the pain of *sjambok* blows.

The beatings sounded as regular as the rattle of a machine gun.

It was time for me to move. An', believe me, I wasted no more time. This was what I wanted—action. I wasn't tired, or hungry, or thirsty any more.

Upriver I made my way. Darkness made no never mind to me. I know the veld an' the bush. An' I ain't boasting. I went my way, most as easy as if it had been broad daylight. I'd have gone faster, only my thigh hurt above a bit. The croc hadn't torn the flesh much to speak of—crocs don't—but he'd bruised me bad, though.

I don't know how long I trekked—it don't matter much—afore I came to the place where I figured to cross the river.

The bank was steep an' I lost my balance about half way down. I thought the noise I made'd waken the dead. I started an avalanche. I reckon half the bank fell on top of me. A boulder, it felt as big as a house, cracked me on the side of the head.

The next I knew I was in the water, an'

something was pulling at my legs. I most near let out a yell, thinking a croc had got me again.

I held on to myself, though. It wasn't no crocodile, but it might have been for all that seeing the way I was lying. The lower half of me was in the water and it was the current a-tugging at my legs.

I staggered to my feet an' waded into the river, an' first thing I knew I was out of my depth an' being carried downstream as fast as all get out.

There ain't much point in gabbing about what I felt like, or how most of the time I was nearer drowned than not. Anybody with a bit of imagination can make out what I went through. Sure, you've only got to consider the facts.

A night as black as hell; a river in flood; an' a dumb fool of a man—most near crazy he was, what with want of grub, an' the pain of a croc bitten thigh, an' a whack on the head—a-tryin' to swim across it.

There was all sorts of things floating on the top of that river. Hut roofs an' dead goats an' drowned oxen; an' things I could only guess at. There was a tree trunk came lumbering into me. I thought I'd climb up on it an' see if I couldn't steer it to where I wanted to go. So I made a grab for it an' my left hand closed on something like a thick rope. Only this rope was colder than the water, an' it squirmed, an' one end of it hissed. I let go!

It ain't in my power to tell about that midnight swim of mine. If you've got imagination tell it yourself. I've stated the outlines. Only here's a point you'd never think of. When I was opposite Bully Haines' camp—I reckon I was midstream then—the waters reflected the red flares of his camp-fires, an' it looked as if I was swimming in a pool of blood.

It's out of my knowledge to say how long it took me to make that crossing. But I made it. I guess that's sufficient.

I weaved about for a time in the shallows, where the river bent back on itself. An' then I fell an' crawled ashore through a mess of stinking mud, pulling myself along by the reeds which grew thick there. Sharp as spears them reeds was, too. An' there was a stink of hippos. They was a-grunting an' a-squelching in the mud all about. I fell into one of their wallow holes an' was most nearly drowned in water that was muck.

But I made the bank an' high ground at last. I stayed there a bit, an' all the mosquitoes there is in Africa kept me company. They drove me to my feet at last; drove me to keep my rendezvous with Bully Haines.

Come to think of it, I don't know as I knew a hell of a lot what I was doing or why, about that time. Can't say I was conscious of much of anything.

I got a sort of nightmare recollection of wandering about in the darkness. I reckon I sang some of the time, an' shouted, an' cursed. I got strange, hazy recollections of funny noises in the bush, an' thinking the trees had turned to niggers who was creeping along on their bellies. I seem to remember treading on the back of one an' then running like hell when he jumped to his feet an' chased me. Sure, an' a lot of other niggers joined him. I played tag with 'em!

An' I sort of remember thinking my clothes was too blamed heavy an' taking 'em off—coat, pants, shoes, shirt, socks, everything. But I kept my revolver. I buckled the holster round my waist an' swore 'cause it kept slipping down.

An' all that makes another picture, if you've got the imagination to draw it. I ain't got the time or the inclination.

MORNING an' sunrise! I felt a fool. Seems like the daylight brought a bit of sense to my brain. I was like them First Two. I was naked, an' I knew it. You bet your life I knew it. The African bush ain't no place for a white man to go roaming about in the natural.

But that feeling of being a blamed fool didn't last long. Good reason why. I had other things to think of—not, mind you, that I was in any condition to think of anything sanely.

Reckon I must have sort of hypnotized myself with the words:

"Get Bully Haines! Got to get Bully Haines!"

An' the rising sun showed me that I was halfway across the clearing his niggers had cut around his camp. I didn't consider anything else. I yelled and charged. You'd have thought I had a squad behind me, the way I went for that thorn stockade. A squad behind me? There was more than that. But I didn't know it.

All I knew was I meant to get within revolver range of Bully Haines. I didn't care what happened after that. Time for one shot, that was all I craved. I drew my revolver as I ran.

The niggers behind the stockade started firing. An' I laughed. They was dud shots. My native police boys—the men I'd trained—'d have blown me off the face of the earth at that range.

I kept on. I got to the trench they'd dug round the stockade. I leaped it an' tried to force my way through the thorn bush. Mad. That's what I was—mad! So mad that I didn't stop to wonder when some of the niggers on the opposite side made a gap for me to pass through. I didn't even wonder, even, why they made no attempt to stop me, but stood aside, leaving me a clear road to the man I was after.

I stopped about six paces from Bully Haines. I sort of remember that things kept getting light, then dim. I saw things like you see 'em in a dark room when there's a thunderstorm a-ragin'. I saw things, if you know what I mean, by flashes of lightning. My brain, I reckon, was working in spasms—and when it worked I saw. The rest of the time I was wandering in darkness.

These things happened quicker than the telling of 'em. I saw Bully Haines coming toward me, an' I said—what do you think? I said—

"Well, Bully, where do we go from here?"

An' he said—I hardly heard him—

"To hell, to the best of my belief."

An' then something clicked inside my head, an' I walked toward him, or maybe he came to me. Leastways I know I got so close to him that I could put my hand on his shoulder; which I did. And I said—

"Bully Haines, I arrest you in the name of the law and I warn you—"

I couldn't finish. His laugh stopped me. An' then I remembered just what it was I'd come to do. Bully Haines had showed no mercy. By God, he'd receive none. And no word of warning either.

I jammed my revolver against his ribs an' squeezed the trigger. An' then there was no more lightning for a bit—only the darkness.

IT WAS the noise which awakened me again. Noise. It was like as if all hell was let loose. Gun-firing an' yelling, an' the beating of tom-toms. I was lying on a camp bed in Bully Haines' tent. A nigger was kneeling beside me, pouring soup down my throat a spoonful at a time. I snatched the bowl from him an' drained it. There was a bottle of whisky on a table nearby.

Things began to look brighter. I'd done what I'd intended doing, an' I was alive. Not over strong, mark you, but able to sit up an' take nourishment.

I took another swig from the bottle. Bully Haines was dead, that was sure enough, else I wouldn't be here, in his tent, drinking his whisky. But I couldn't make out what all the row outside was about. It puzzled me. I meant to go an' have a look-see. But first another swig. An' then Bully Haines came into the tent.

He snatched the bottle from me.

"Easy on that," he said. "How do you feel?"

Reckon I must have gaped like a fool.

"An' you ain't dead?" I said.

He laughed.

"No thanks to you, I'm not. Your gun was clogged with mud. Nothing happened. Nothing could happen with a gun like that. You ought to be more careful."

I tried to get up. I did get up. I tried to grab his gun and make a job of it.

He handled me as if I was a kid. Held me off with one hand; made me sit down on the bed.

"That's enough of that," he said, "unless you want your brains blown out. I'd do it anyway, only we're running short of ammunition. And, besides, I have a feeling I've seen you before somewhere. Have I? Don't lie."

"You have," I told him. "At Greek Sam's in Lourenço Marques. That was a hell of a time ago. What of it?"

"Ah!"

No, that don't give you what he said. He made a sort of hissing noise as a man will who's hit by a sudden memory. He pushed back my hair from my face an' looked at me long an' careful.

An' the way he laughed. It sounded like a curse.

"It's the Yankee kid grown up," he says as if to himself. Then, louder, he said, "I told you not to cross my path again. What do you think you're doing here?"

"I'm a sergeant in the B.S.A.P. I came to arrest you for murder. I came to shoot you on sight."

"You tried both and failed. Now what?"

I said nothing. What was the use? In my experience of things, men don't act like stage heroes. I'd made my attempt an' failed. Bully Haines held the whip hand. There was nothing I could do. An' what was the good of calling him names. He knew what he was.

But I was curious about all the shouting and shooting going on. An' clouds of smoke blew into the tent. An' I heard the crackling of flames.

"What's going on outside, Bully?" I asked.

He didn't answer me. Instead he said, in a funny sort of voice:

"When I first saw you charging my camp I told myself, 'Here comes my way out of a nasty mess. I'll offer him as a trade for safe conduct.' But now I know who you are!" He shrugged his shoulders and laughed that funny way again. "Well! It only goes to show the danger of making promises to chance met fools. I suppose—" and how the steel in his voice dug under my skin—"you're going to whine and remind me of that promise?"

"You go to hell!" I said. "I don't know what you're talking about." And I didn't then. I didn't then.

He looked at me as if he didn't believe me. Then he says calmly:

"My camp's surrounded by niggers. They've done what I never dreamed they'd ever do. Two big *kraals* have joined forces. Two *kraals* I've been playing off against each other for years so I could do my recruiting in peace. But they've joined forces and I can't hold 'em off much longer. The bush is lousy with them. They've killed half of my niggers. The ones still alive haven't got guts to win through. If you're strong enough, better come and see the finish. Better get dressed, though. You'll find some clothes in that tin trunk. And I'll send you a revolver and cartridges."

"I'll come gunning for you, if you do," I warned.

He shrugged his shoulders again, laughed and left the tent.

I got some clothes out of his trunk an' put 'em on. They fitted here an' there. I remember expanding my chest trying to fill out the coat. I pulled on some boots an' reeled out of the tent just as a nigger came up and gave me a revolver and a cartridge belt.

It took me a bit before I could make out what was going on.

Huddled together in the center of the camp were the niggers Haines had recruited in my district. They was so scared they didn't know me. An' maybe, too, I didn't look like a sergeant of the police. There was dead ones amongst them. For all the movement or noise the living made, you'd have thought them dead too.

I couldn't see much more. The thorn fence was on fire an' clouds of smoke rolled across the clearing. I got my foretaste of the heat of hell.

Bully Haines an' his niggers was firing

through the smoke at the niggers who were attacking.

Here an' there, where the flames thinned, I could see them. Hundreds of 'em. Just as Bully Haines said, the bush was lousy with them. Showers of *assegais* kept dropping into the camp, an' heavy slugs from old muzzle loaders.

I saw an *assegai* stick into Bully Haines' shoulder. He pulled it out and threw it back at the nigger who'd cast it. It went through that nigger just as if he'd been made of butter. Two of Haines' niggers dropped. He only had three left. Bully Haines caught sight of me.

"You're just in time for the end, Yank," he shouted. "They'll rush us soon."

"Not before I've settled with you," I said.

An' I aimed at him. I leaned against a tree stump and aimed.

"Hurry up," he said, facing me square, "or you'll be too late."

A big nigger—he was one of the leaders of the attackers, I reckon—was making his way through a place where the fire had died down. He got through; he rushed at Bully Haines.

I shifted my aim. God knows why. I'd got nothing against the nigger. He was going to do what I hadn't the nerve to do. An' yet, seems like I've only had one creed knocked into me ever since I was knee high to a yearling. White men must stick together. I ain't trying to justify myself. I'm stating facts.

I shifted my aim, fired, an' the nigger fell.

"I'm not thanking you for that," Bully Haines said bitterly.

An' then, as I got the drift of the things the niggers were yelling, I understood why he wouldn't thank me. They aimed to capture us alive. They included me in it. They was crazy with blood lust. They were out for vengeance against Bully Haines. They hated him—an' he was white. Therefore they hated all white men. Fair enough, it seemed to me. Maybe you'll find fault with that logic. You've got to be able to think black in order to understand it.

An' so they was going to capture us alive—an' then torture. The things they boasted they'd do! Haines' other men went down.

Bully Haines swore at me. He put his hands in his pockets an' called me killing names. He wanted me to shoot him. The niggers were closing in on us. But they still kept a respectful distance. There was no need for them to hurry. They had us surrounded; they could take their time. And they weren't trying to kill us.

Bully Haines ran to where his labor recruits squatted. He knocked the chains off one—he wasn't from my district—and hauled him to his feet. He spoke fast. He knew the lingo better, even, than me.

"They are your people out there," he said. "Go to them. Say I want to parley with the headmen. Say that I hold ten of your kin here and if they do not listen to my terms I will shoot them all. Now, go swiftly."

"*Inkosi*," the native replied, "you gave your word no harm should come to me or my kin. *Au-a!* You are a hard man, but you keep your word. Then why threaten death?"

"Because," said Bully Haines, "the word given yesterday can not be destroyed by the word given today. I make good a former word. That is all. Now go."

And the nigger went. He understood. But I didn't. Not then.

PRESENTLY the messenger returned. With him were two old graybeards. Hate reddened their eyes.

"Our ears are open," one said contemptuously. "Do you beg for mercy? If so, save your wind. You will need it when the white hot iron begins to sear."

Bully Haines laughed.

"I do not beg. I demand."

And the other countered:

"You are finished. We can take you when we will. How can you demand?"

"Listen," said Haines. "Is your desire for vengeance so weak that my death will appease it?"

"You will die many deaths before the end comes. The women will light a slow fire on your naked belly; but before that—" He described other tortures and Bully Haines laughed.

"Look!" he said, holding his revolver to his head. "If I squeeze ever so little I release death. And where is your vengeance?"

The old ones gasped.

"Speak on," they said. "We will listen,"

"I demand," said Haines slowly, "that those people who belong to the land across the river be allowed to return to their *kraals* in safety. There shall be no harm done them. I demand that you allow this other white man to go in safety. *Au-a!* And truly that you had better do. For he is a man of the police."

The old ones grinned sarcastically.

"We have no fear of the policemen who dwell across the river. You taught us that. And what else do you demand?"

"Little else. Save that you permit me to cross the river with the white policeman and those people who are his people."

The two chiefs played their part gravely to the end.

"And if we agree to your demands, what do you offer us in exchange?"

"Myself," Haines replied simply.

"You mean, white man—"

"That I will recross the river and give myself into your hands alive."

"When?"

"This same day!"

"*Wo-we!* And what pledge have we that you will return? A bird, freed from a snare, does not return to it."

"I give you my word. Is not that enough?"

They nodded.

"Truly. We know that your word has always been a rope to tie you."

"And you agree to my terms? Or must I now put an end to my life?"

They hesitated a moment; they were hungry for vengeance.

"We agree," they said. "Hasten now. The river is down and the crossing easy. When the sun is overhead you shall be back with us again."

"Before that," Haines promised.

The old men backed away and vanished in the bush beyond the clearing.

Haines stood staring after them, a fixed look in his eyes. I went up to him.

"Bully," I said, "you ain't going to get away with this. Think I'm going to buy my life by having you tortured? I'll shoot you myself first."

"Don't be a fool," he said. "You've missed your chance of that." An' quick as a flash he leaped on me, took my revolver away and bound my hands together with a length of rope. "Now," he said, "perhaps you'll see sense. Once over the river, do you think I'm coming back? Is it likely, you fool? My bluff worked; that's all I care about."

"You gave your word," I said slowly, remembering his reputation.

He laughed.

"Don't be a fool. I had my fingers crossed."

And he turned away from me and knocked the chains off the labor recruits. Them who he'd recruited from my district he made take up bundles of grub an' trade stuff. They struck his tent and made packs of it and all his gear. Then he ordered them to march and we set off for the river.

Me and him were at their head. He supported me with one arm. A revolver was in his left hand; he held it pressed against his temple. That was to remind them others what'd happen if they broke their contract. They didn't. They kept a good distance from us. They shouted things. They pelted us with filth, that was all.

The river crossing was easy. Haines knew where the ford was. Besides, the river had gone down a goodish bit. At that, I'd have been swept away if it hadn't been for Haines' strong arm.

We climbed up the steep bank the other side. An' there—I was winded—I sat down a bit. Bully Haines took the niggers aside and talked to them. I didn't hear what he said. Didn't much care. I was tryin' to figure out what'd be my next move. An' I was beginning to feel sorry for myself; beginning to see what a hell of a mess I'd made of the whole business.

And I shouted:

"Hi, Haines! Untie this rope. What's the idea? You're in British territory now an' I warn you—"

Guess I must have been getting delirious again.

I looked back across the river. The niggers were lining the bank. They was shouting, but I couldn't hear what. I could guess, though. If my hands'd been free I'd have thumbed my nose at them.

Haines came to where I was. There was a couple of natives with him. Big fellows. Men I knew and who knew me. They came and stood one on each side of me. Haines stood in front of me.

"Damn you, Yank!" he said. "It was a bad day you ever crossed my path. Oh, well, these niggers tell me you've gained a reputation of sorts. You always get your man, I hear. Well, here's one time when you fail.

"S'long, Yank, and damn you!"

And he meant it.

"S'long!" I said. "But don't be so free with your damning. This isn't the end by a long shot."

"That's where you're wrong, Yank," he says. "It is."

And the next thing I knew he was making the return trip across the river.

I jumped to my feet.

"Come back, you damned fool," I yelled.

I tried to go after him, but the two niggers held me firm. An' my hands were tied; an' I was weak.

"Where's he going?" I asked one of the men guarding me. But I knew.

"To keep his bond, *inkosi*, to keep his bond."

I sat down again—nothing else I could do—an' watched.

An' all the other niggers who'd crossed with us, they came an' watched too.

We saw them on the other side come down to the river an' wade out to meet Bully Haines. We saw them take him. He didn't struggle; just went to them as calm as if he was going to bed.

My niggers kept me there all that day an' all that night. They wouldn't budge an' I couldn't budge without them. I knew what they was waiting for. An' I couldn't blame 'em. They could hear the yells of them on the other side. If they'd have dared they'd have crossed to join in the game. They craved vengeance just as much as them others. But they daren't cross. An' so they waited, hoping to hear a white man's screams for mercy.

Me they treated well, save they wouldn't cut me loose. They was afraid I'd try to rescue Bully Haines. Maybe I was mad enough to do that. I dunno. Maybe not. Reckon he deserved all they gave him over there.

They fed me, and doctored my wounds and bruises. And they told me bits I hadn't understood.

I wondered why he had told me that once across the river he had no intention of going back. I wondered if his going had been a bit of gallery play. You see, I was figuring that his game was up. If he stayed this side he was sure to be nabbed an' he'd have to swing for murder. An' I thought his going off like he did was a grand gesture. I thought, maybe, that he figured to get off light when he came to the final summing up, if he made a sort of deathbed repentance, if you know what I mean.

But I was all wrong. He died, I reckon, as he lived—damned hard an' according to his creed.

One of my niggers put me wise to the right of things.

"He could have escaped from those evil ones had he desired, *inkosi*. But he had given his word to save your life. It was given long ago, you say. But what matter? When that one gave his word he kept it. If it was his promise to kill, he killed. He promised to give a life to save your life. He kept his word. And to keep that word he had to give yet another word.

"You say he told you that he would not go back to those over there. *Au-a, inkosi!* He had to say that. Would you have come willingly had he not come too?"

An' that answers everything.

I reckon that's all. That's the end of Bully Haines. A bloody villain, if there ever was one. But wasn't he something else too? I dunno! This blasted jungle fever fogs a man's judgment.

THE SAILORS' FLOPHOUSE

CAPTAIN MANSFIELD

FEW LANDLUBBERS there are who know the origin of the flophouse. Paddy West invented the "flop". Paddy kept a sailor's boarding house on Cherry Street, New York, in the days when Western Ocean packets bred packet rats, an opprobrious name for the salts who manned those hookers. From all accounts a harder lot of pelicans never munched salt horse.

Paddy's business grew as packet ships increased until his rooms were crowded to capacity. Paddy scratched his red head. He was a retired packet rat himself, retired from being flipped off a main yardarm by a parted topsail sheet. The scratching of his head stirred up an idea.

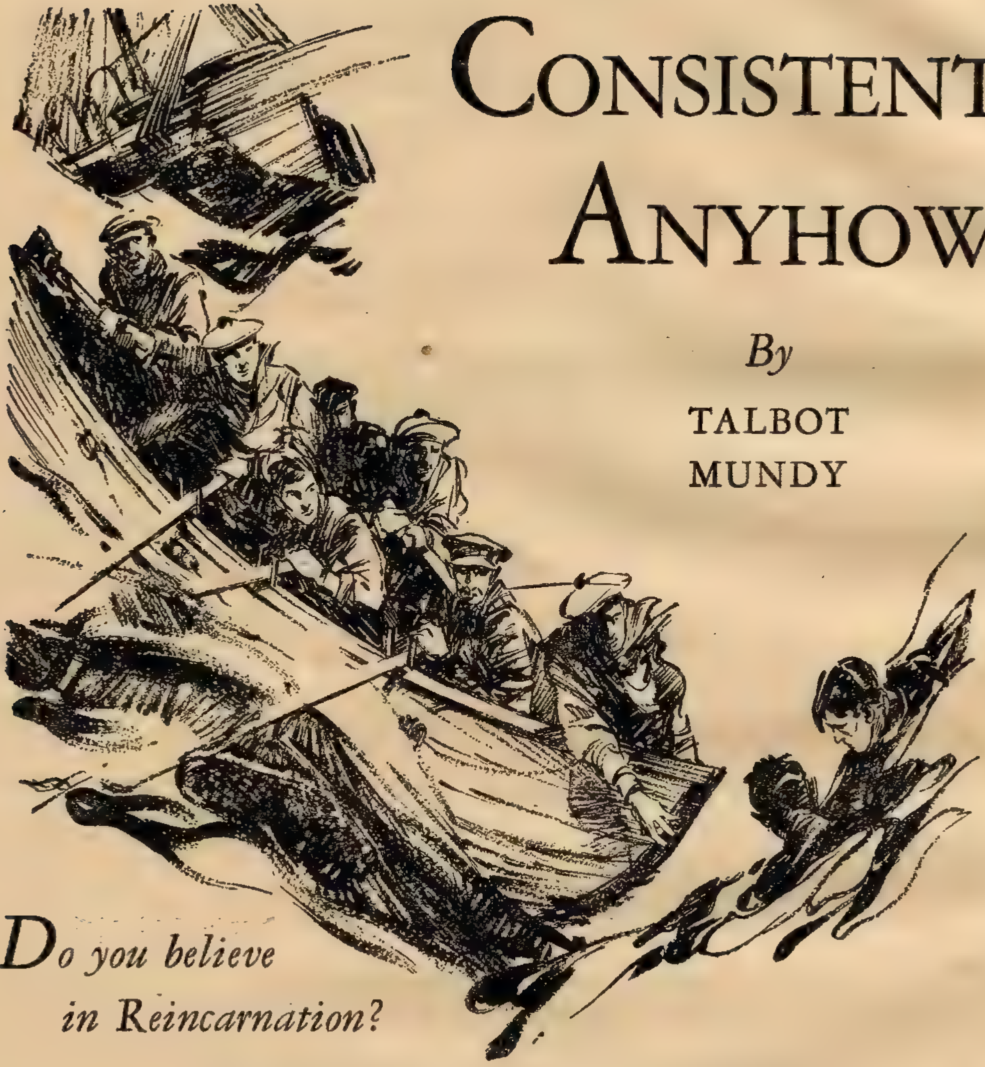
He turned the long hall of his house into a dormitory by stretching a six-inch hawser from one end of the hall to the other. The rope was two feet from the floor. Just the height for a man sitting on the floor to lean over and sleep with the maximum amount of comfort, far more comfort indeed than the focsle of a madly driven ship afforded in wintry weather.

At four bells of the gravy-eye watch—six A.M.—Paddy supplied the flop by letting go the watch tackle that bowsed the hawser taut.

CONSISTENT ANYHOW

By

TALBOT MUNDY



Do you believe in Reincarnation?

THE STRANGE TALE OF A YOUTH WHO SEEMED ENDOWED WITH THE SPIRIT OF SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

TAKE him or leave him he was Tommy Knott of Lesmahago, ruddy faced and ruddy brown haired, solidly built, five feet ten and one half inches tall in his socks, as physically tough as the rubber they use for making truck tires and as gentle—in his own way—as a stick of dynamite; that is, until he detonated, at times and in ways one could never foresee. He had rather wistful blue eyes and a way of looking puzzled that made women love him and want to mother him. Some tried it, including the Hag of Doko's house at Rugby.

Tommy and I were birched the same day, for the same twofold offense: being out of bounds and betting at Warwick races. We had hoped to be expelled, because our parents had threatened to send us to sea if that should happen. Birching was an ignominious anticlimax. But the Hag was a kindly soul, whose proper title was matron; she wanted us to pray properly and not ruin our hopes of Kingdom Come, so she invited us into the Hag's den, as her room was called, for hot bread and milk before bedtime prayers in Hall.

"We'll come for it after prayers," Tommy suggested.

Her den was out of bounds after prayers but she had a certain amount of latitude in an emergency and there was no risk of interruption, so Tommy opened up, as he certainly never would have done if boys of our own age had been listening. The Hag was Welsh, which means more than appears on the surface—much more. Neither Romans, Saxons, Normans, Danes nor English ever conquered the Welsh worth mentioning because nobody could ever discover where they keep their sense of values. You have to prod a fellow in his private point of view before you have him licked, and the Welsh hide theirs under a veil of mysticism that baffles the Welsh themselves as much as any one.

The Hag tried sermonizing until the bread and milk was all lapped up. It was just as Tommy finished his last spoonful that she said:

"My father was a Druid. You boys ought to listen to me."

"Druid?" said Tommy. "Then you know about reincarnation?"

She looked into his eyes and they exchanged some sort of mutual recognition made alert by instant mutual mistrust. She shook her head.

"Such stuff! Who ever heard of it? What nonsense have you been reading?"

"A Gypsy told me," Tommy answered. "A tribe of them with horses, carts and tents camped on my father's estate in Scotland, but McNab the gamekeeper ordered them off. It was raining and night coming on, so I wouldn't have it. I called McNab a bully and he called me a young cockerel, all crow and no spurs, so I offered to fight him and he went to bring my father. The Pater was pretty sick of poachers; however, he let the Gypsies stay the night and when he'd gone I stayed out in the rain to watch that McNab didn't disobey orders; he did come back, but when he saw me there he went away again. Then one of the Gypsy women said she'd 'dukker' for me, so I let her see my hand."

The Hag looked horrified, but there was curiosity behind the horror, and behind that curiosity was conviction.

"Such stuff and nonsense," she said. "I'm surprised that a nice young gentleman like you would listen to it. What did the Gypsy woman tell you?"

"Said I'd been a big one in a lot of former lives," said Tommy, "but that I lost it all by being ruthless. She said that in a former life I'd killed my best friend for the sake of my own authority. She said, if I want to get back among the leaders of men and be a big one again in future lives, I've got to die this time for somebody else's sake and do it without regret or grudge or hope of profit. So I will. You bet I will."

The Hag nodded, watching Tommy's eyes again.

"Did she say who you were that time you killed your friend?" she asked.

"No, she didn't," said Tommy, "though, of course, I asked her."

The Hag sighed.

"It isn't good for us to know those things," she remarked. "Myself, I always think I was a mean, uncharitable woman who let the poor go naked. I have to mend so many suits of underwear and darn so many pairs of socks. But there's no knowing."

"But the Gypsy did say," Tommy went on, "that if I'd sleep under the trees, come rain or wind, and if I'd be careful to hold no hatred while I did it, then I might remember. So, of course, I've tried that lots of times."

"And you remembered?" the Hag asked him.

"Dunno. But I've dreamed."

"Don't tell. Never tell dreams. It spoils their coming true."

"I won't."

The Hag looked dourly disappointed but nodded and went on darning some one's socks.

"But Doughty was Sir Francis Drake's best friend," said Tommy, "and Sir Francis hanged him for disobedience, somewhere over on the Spanish Main."

"And you think you were Sir Francis Drake?"

"I didn't say so," Tommy answered; nor would he say another word except "good night, and thank you for the bread and milk."

However, there was a dam down that night. We went upstairs to the dormitory after lights were out, and of course it was supposed we did that to escape comment on the birching. Comment was therefore doubled and redoubled and there was a fight in the dark that beat all dormitory records. It did the two of us a world of good by restoring self-respect, and when we lay in bed at last, he nursing a bloody nose and I a black eye, Tommy whispered to me—our cots were next each other—

"Do you think Sir Francis Drake would be ashamed of that scrap?"

Never after that did he refer to his secret conviction or to the advice that the Gypsy gave him, except in moments of high emotion after periods of strain; but I have never known him to behave, in any circumstances, in such way that that story he told in the Hag's den might not serve as a key to explain his conduct. One does not have to like his theory, or even to regard it as respectable, in order to admire him, provided of course that one admires consistency and courage.

WE WERE neither of us scholars of the sort who leave their names inscribed on honor rolls. Relief, I imagine, was mutual when our parents decided at last to yield to importunity and let us fight our own way in the world. We were sent to sea as "gentleman cadets" on board a most unladylike she-buzzard of a bark that cleared from the Port of London for Sydney, Australia, with a cargo of steel rails and a dozen passengers, of whom nine were drunks in need of solitude and three were morphine addicts. It was a dry ship, in the alcoholic meaning of the word; the captain smashed one case of whisky that a passenger smuggled along with his luggage; but the morphine maniacs had plenty of their stuff in small packets and a ship is as full as a dock-side rat's heart of undiscoverable hiding places. So the morphine maniacs, for the sake of peace or holy charity, converted all the drunks and we were a nice mess long before we rounded Cape Horn. The captain, who was a deeply religious Scotsman out of Aberdeen, decided it was wicked not to raise hell there and then. So hell we had, the weather aiding him.

Tommy and I were in the captain's watch. The theory was that all the heavy labor on the ship was to be done by able seamen, who should teach us cadets gradually, by example, something of their arts and mysteries. We were also to learn navigation "in our spare time." What we did learn was a wondrous line of profanity, for which the captain docked our allowance of butter and jam, and we discovered that the mystery was how many minutes of stark hard labor could be crowded into a four-hour watch.

However, Tommy liked it, and I tried to. It was one of his peculiar theories that hardship fits a man for something sterling in a future life; and when we were both of us so tired that we could not stand he used to try to whistle "Hearts Of Oak" before he fell asleep. We had no spare time whatever, so we learned no navigation; but we did learn what a certain sort of passenger will do when the dope supply gives out.

It was just before the worst storm of the voyage that the captain found a cache of morphine and threw it overboard. It belonged to a passenger named Twill, who had been a mild mannered and vaguely humorous person hitherto; comparatively speaking, tolerant even of the deadly monotonous food and fond of singing sentimental love songs. He and the mate were on friendly terms. The mate was almost human, a good sailor and not given to worrying over other people's morals; he was a man who would be satisfied to sail the old hooker right side up past Sydney Heads and to leave morals to the bishops and gentry. It was the mate who suggested plug tobacco as a substitute for morphine.

"Steep it in water and use the juice," he counseled. "It looks like it. It'll help you kid yourselves."

He was perfectly serious as he spoke.

It was the mate, too, who admitted there was morphine in the ship's chest. But the chest was in the captain's locker and the captain kept the key. It was one of Tommy's jobs, and sometimes mine, to go to the captain's cabin and bring him an extra muffler or the patent medicine he took for indigestion. We were south of Cape Agulhas, under a gray sky, almost rolling the spars out of the ship, but with scarcely any wind; it was between two storms, and the worst of the two to come, when Tommy was struck by a chicken coop that broke loose from its lashings on the midship deckhouse. It did not hurt him seriously, but the captain ordered him to go and lie down. He gave the order with a sneer, as if only degenerates ever got hurt.

Instead of going to his bunk in the midship deckhouse Tommy lay down on a seat outside it that the passengers sometimes used.

Twill brought an old wool blanket and covered him. Twill offered money—first five, then fifty pounds—if Tommy or I would steal the morphine from the captain's cabin.

He was pathetically desperate. He said the other passengers were even worse, and they certainly looked it; they were roving the deck by that time like a lot of crazy eyed animals.

"The mate," said Twill to Tommy, "is a human being. If the mate were in charge of the ship he would have sense enough to serve out enough morphine to keep our souls in our bodies."

He looked away with a dead face, and Tommy watched me.

TOMMY and I both tried to earn the fifty pounds and Tommy was caught trying to force the medicine locker. The captain knocked him down with a blow on the ear from behind and would have kicked him—being, as I said, a righteous man—but the steward intervened; it seemed the steward knew enough about the captain to exert a certain influence. Within an hour after that it began to blow big guns straight out of the south and, because we were carrying more sail than was good for us, the whole crew went to work, including "gentlemen cadets," and there was one long night of hell to pay, with several days and nights to follow that were no man's picnic. We forgot the passengers.

However, it seems that morphine addicts suddenly deprived of their supply of dope do not forget themselves. They were being pitched around in a smelly dark saloon and fed what the steward chose to bring them, in a bucket, in his own good time. It was the mate who let them out at last for air and exercise, one night as he was turning in, when the seas had ceased sweeping the deck and there was a watery moon to be seen for the first time in more than a week. They came out like a lot of goblins swaying in the wind; then the saloon door slammed and they vanished in darkness.

It was the captain's watch. Tommy and I, to save a quartermaster's muscles for the sterner work, were standing a trick at the wheel together. It needed all our united strength to keep the helm where the captain wanted it and he was being choosey with his language, picking Presbyterian phrases with which to hurt what feelings we might have left and to discourage any hope of comfort in the life to come. I don't believe he noticed any more than we did that the passengers were herding themselves near the steps at the break of the poop.

After an hour and a half of staring at a lubber's line one's eyes play tricks. At the risk of another acidly sarcastic sermon from the captain I rested my eyes by letting them rove for a minute, aloft and then windward, watching the thin moonlight trying to make patterns on a murky wilderness of raw sea. So I was the first to see the passengers, Twill leading. They came in a hurry, just as the captain caught me with my eyes astray and turned, with his back toward them, to thrust his fist under my nose and show his yellow teeth. He liked you to see him as well as hear him.

He was swept away as if a wave had taken him—a wave of man-shaped shadows. Twill was the only one who spoke.

"You two boys look the other way!" He yelled it upwind and I don't think Tommy heard him. In my other ear Tommy shouted at me:

"Can you hold her? If you can't, let her come up and stay in the wind!"

He let go, and alone I had no more control of the wheel than a child has of a runaway horse. So I let her come up into the wind and, of course, that fetched the deck watch out from under shelter and the second mate hurrying aft to learn what orders were. There was so much noise aloft, and so much thundering of waves against the ship's bow that you could not have heard a salvo of artillery. Four of the passengers ran to the forward poop rail to prevent the second mate from interfering. I stood by the wheel. The second mate made short work of those four maniacs; they had no courage, only cravings, and he came over the rail like a devil out of hell into their midst—too late to save the captain, who was backed against the taffrail trying to keep drug crazy passengers from holding him while some one stole his keys.

It was hard in the dark to see what happened, but some one yelled, "Man overboard!" Two seamen took the wheel from me. I ran to lend Tommy a hand, for I had seen him struggling with the passengers; but Twill now lay stunned in the scuppers and all the others had retreated to the forward rail before the second mate's onslaught. The captain was missing. I was just in time to see Tommy vault over the taffrail and go plunging into an icy sea in the dark in search of him when the mate came hurrying on deck as full of fury as a typhoon; it took him less than thirty seconds to discover what had happened—less than thirty more to get things moving man o' war style. I threw a lifebelt overboard.

The lifeboat falls were frozen; he and the second mate beat them free with marlinspikes. The mate had earned his ticket on a whaler and was fussy about getting boats away, so he had drilled the crew and the men all knew their jobs. There was a boat in a trough of the sea in no time, with the second mate in charge and myself in the bow—I went hand over hand down the falls before any one could stop me. It was none of my business, but I think the mate knew how much Tommy's friendship meant to me; at any rate he said nothing, then or afterward.

IT BEGAN to blow big guns almost before the boat was in the water, smothering us in spindrift, and we could not see the ship's hull fifty feet away, but the mate lit a flare and we steered by that, the men rowing like whalers to keep themselves warm. Not one of us had any hope of finding Tommy and the captain; we were going through the motions of rescue for decency's sake. Crouching in the bow, I held a boathook ready, but I could not even see the gaff on the end of it, so dark it was and such a welter of blinding spray.

I remember wondering whether Tommy had not fulfilled the terms that the Gypsy woman mentioned, and the scene in the Hag's den at Rugby returned so vividly that for a moment I was almost warm. But I remember thinking, too, that to be fair those terms should have included a successful sacrifice on Tommy's part—the captain's life should be saved, even if Tommy should die to bring about that otherwise wholly undesirable result.

Strange, what thoughts will cross a fellow's mind in moments of appalling danger. It was torturing danger, in a din of wind and water, in the bitter darkness of antarctic night, imagination aiding. An inch of freeboard, more or less, was our margin of safety. A mistake by a man at an oar would have lost us. And instead of thinking about Tommy in the sea, I wondered whether the captain's sour faced wife, whose photo hung from a nail on the cabin bulkhead, would not prefer to have him drown for the insurance money.

Once, as the nose of the boat went downward into a moaning hollow—straight on end, it seemed, with eight men and the second mate so high in air behind me that I thought they must fall on my back—I saw a sort of vision: back in Aberdeen the captain's wife, black bonneted and sour, with her grim right hand withdrawn through the opening of her long black glove. She was signing a receipt for the insurance. I could see the avarice on her face. I could see the smear on the mahogany partition against which a generation of seated clients had leaned their heads. The official who paid the money was a bald man in a frock coat and he had paper protectors on the cuffs of a stiff white shirt. He dipped the pen in the inkwell for her, but she shook it and dipped again to suit herself.

Then the bow of the boat went upward and the vision vanished as I clung to keep myself from falling backward. I could see nothing, although I looked down and behind me and it felt as if the boat were turning over backward into a howling black hole. We bucked over an enormous wave, and then I knew that was the end of us; knew it—knew it as we corkscrewed, plunging into blackness on the far side; knew it, I say; for I saw Tommy Knott, in I know not what strange trick of light, come sailing down toward us on the slope of a mountain of water that it seemed impossible to climb. He clung to something. I thought our boat's nose would dive straight under him.

I reached out—I would rather drown with Tommy than with anybody else—but he caught my hand, and with his other hand he seized the boat's nose, which was not six inches above water. God knows what the second mate did with the steering oar but we went up again, shouldering it this time, lifting Tommy as we rose, he clinging to the gunwale and I struggling helplessly to pull him inboard. He resisted, and I could not understand why. All this happened in about a second, I suppose, but it seemed like endless minutes.

The bow man shipped his oar then and clambered forward to help me. It was he who saw that Tommy's arm was through the line of the lifebelt that I had thrown overboard. Lashed to it by a line around his shoulders was the captain. We pulled the captain in first, and then Tommy came overside without assistance.

"Missed it!" Tommy grumbled in my ear. "He's as dead as kippered herring, damn him!"

That was all. We had to bail our way back to the ship and the men at the oars were so spent that they almost smashed the boat against the ship's side when we crept up at last to leeward and I caught and made fast to the bow fall. By that time Tommy, lying in about a foot of water in the bottom of the boat with his head on a coil of line, was so limp and cold that I supposed we should have to bury him, too, with the captain. However, he recovered strength enough to climb out unassisted by the time we had the boat on deck; and what with hot rum that the mate provided, and the rubbing that I gave him nearly all night long, by morning he was not much worse for wear. But never, then or subsequently, did he talk about what had happened, either to me or, as far as I know, to anybody else.

The mate, of course, asked questions.

"Come on, sonny, speak up—got to log the details."

But Tommy insisted that he could not remember anything from the time when he saw the captain fall over the taffrail and went in after him. And when I questioned him in private he merely stared with a sort of dumb resentment, as if I had trespassed beyond the zone where friendship's privileges ceased. Looking back, however, I believe he gave me later on the clue to his inmost thought, although I did not realize it at the time.

The mate had read the solemn service for the burial of the dead at sea, and we had watched our chance between enormous waves to raise the hatch on which the captain's body lay with two iron stanchions fastened to its feet. It slid overboard and vanished. As the mate turned aft and one of the boys went forward to the galley to bring our dinner, Tommy turned to me and said:

"How old, do you know, was Doughty when Drake hanged him?"

I did not know, and I don't know now. It was one of those unimportant details that even Hakluyt does not mention. But from that moment there dates a strangely persistent mental image that I see at all sorts of times, particularly as I fall asleep, or in long dreams after a spell of hard work, or awake in moments of strong excitement. I could see it then, when Tommy spoke, as clearly as I had seen that other picture of the captain's widow drawing the insurance—

On a wild sea, three small ships of obvious Elizabethan rig. No land in sight. One ship, somewhat smaller than the others, running downwind, not answering a string of signals from the largest ship which, with the other one, seems to be trying to work to windward.

I find I can't set in words how intimate and personal to me that mental image seems. Increasingly it stirs in me a sense of something vaguely wrong but unexplainable. I feel about it as I do about the famous picture of the French at the sunken road at Quatre Bras, only it is much more personal.

It baffles me to tell exactly what the feeling is, and it is something I have never liked to talk about, though once or twice I mentioned it to Tommy. But he had only one unvarying explanation of dreams and visions, from which no argument could shift him. In fact, he never would argue about it. He was so convinced that it bored him to think that any one could be so stupid as to doubt—just as it might bore a fundamentalist to have to argue about Noah's Deluge.

"Memory, that's all. Just something from a past life. Possibly a time when you were drowned or something. Maybe you fell overboard and saw the ships sailing away."

I WAS for deserting the ship in Sydney, although we both liked the mate, to whom the owners cabled to take over the command. But Tommy would not even consider it; he said we had signed on for the voyage out and home and no man worth his salt would think of flinching, even if the owners were a lot of crimps and the ship a rat trap.

However, there was a long delay about getting a full cargo for the voyage home, so time was on our hands and I had opportunity to make acquaintances ashore, of whom one was the son of a banker who owned a cattle station.

The long and short of that was that the banker cabled to our parents and to the owners of the ship, so that within a week we were released from our apprenticeship to go and ride the ranges at a pound a week and rations. Barring a few fights with station hands, who took a licking with astonishing good temper and became so proud of Tommy that they tempted men from far off ranges to come and try conclusions, there was nothing exciting to do.

A station foreman's daughter learned that Tommy was entirely willing to be loved, and even to be generous in return, but that he was better at breaking heel ropes than the wildest stallion that ever saw a skyline. We were getting deadly weary of it when the Boer War broke out, and we enlisted promptly in the first Australian contingent. We were sergeants before we embarked for the Cape. Tommy was troop sergeant-major by the time we reached the firing line. We both received commissions on the same day and before the war had dragged itself to a finish Tommy had his colonelcy. He might have become a general but for offense that he gave to certain individuals with high red collars. However, I anticipate.

The secret of Tommy's success, and of the check it received, was simple. He was heart and soul in anything that he attempted and he tolerated nothing less than that from any one, myself for instance, whose duty it was to take orders from him. He was such a drastic disciplinarian that I feared our men might shoot him in the first engagement. Many an officer lost his life in that way; probably there never was a war when officers have not been murdered by their own men. But the moment the fighting began he stood forgiven. He knew how to lead. He saw everything—understood everything—kept his head—knew how to be audacious and how to rest men and horses calmly when half a battle line was on the verge of panic.

Our troop lost all its officers in the first engagement; it was Tommy who brought us out of it with only a few troopers wounded and none missing. He and we were mentioned in dispatches. After that not a man in the troop would hear a word against him, since Australians will stand for anything whatever from a man with head and heart.

We had to stand for quite a lot from Tommy. As I mentioned, we were both promoted from the ranks on the same day; but he was senior. He had a breezy, genial manner, with a laugh forever on his lips and a good joke ready to be sprung whenever needed—barracky jokes they were, as personal as a boil on the neck; but he could take one in return that would have rattled any man afflicted with false dignity. He was Tommy to every one, and to his face, on duty. But he exacted as much formal respect from me, who was his junior by just one number, as if he had been a colonel of the household cavalry and I a new probation subaltern. If a trooper forgot to salute him there were fireworks, snappy and effective.

That is not the stuff that fits into the Australians' normal scheme of things, but he was reasonable when they taxed him with it. I remember one night when we all lay under blankets fixed on bayonets in the rain; we were in reserve behind the field artillery, too lousy and cold to fall asleep. I lay amid a dozen troopers for the sake of the warmth, my own torn blanket having been "requisitioned" for a sick horse. Tommy joined us, and what started argument was his excusing us from standing to salute him.

"All right, fellows, lie down. God, it's a brute of a night."

He crawled in on his hands and knees and lay between two troopers, the mud squelching under him. Presently he passed us cigarets, and those were as scarce just then as lice were plentiful.

"Where did you steal 'em, Tommy?" some trooper asked.

"I won 'em. Betted a whole month's pay against six packets that I could put that wrestling gunner captain on his back in less than five minutes. Managed it in something under two. The gunners' mess offered to buy 'em back at any price I cared to name. I told 'em I needed 'em for fighting men. Why else should I wrestle a man who needs a lady's maid to blow his nose?"

THAT let down bars a bit, suggesting odious comparisons, and for awhile there was ribald comment on the lot of Tommy Atkins, who was rated hardly socially equal to himself in those days, to say nothing of the depth at which he lived beneath an officer. Then, suddenly:

"What price you then, Tommy? If an officer's no different from a man in the ranks—"

"Who said he isn't? Any man of my troop who thinks there's no difference may fight me under any rules he pleases, fists or feet, and find out."

"True enough. But how about all this damned saluting?"

I saw the three ships then. I believed it was something in Tommy's steadfastness to an idea, the sudden rallying of his will to defend a principle that brought the vision before my brain—one ship running downwind, refusing to answer signals from the other two. But I don't know why it should have done that. Any man's guess is as good as the next's when it comes to speculating about tricks of imagination. Something had stirred Tommy's mind and set him talking—mind you, to a group of men who were not particularly familiar with the history of England, beyond scraps that they had read in school books through the eyes of colonial prejudice.

"Sir Francis Drake," he remarked, "had a tougher crew than you to manage, and a tougher enemy to fight than anything we'll have to tackle this trip."

Australians love to argue, tongues or fists, no matter which.

"Drake would have done better if he'd told Queen Bess to go to hell," said some one.

"Rot!" said Tommy. "Gloriana was his queen."

"She was a damned old fool. She was as vain as all our red throated staff officers rolled into one screaming peacock, and she never knew her own mind, barring she wanted to have her cake and eat it and to hell with everybody else."

"Maybe," said Tommy, "but she was the only queen Sir Francis had and he made the best of her. He obeyed her even when he knew she was mistaken. He made others obey him the same way. She never let any one forget she was the queen. He never let any one forget he was her admiral. That's why he ate his meals alone, off silver plate, to the sound of trumpets, even though he let the whole crew call him Frankie to his face and there wasn't a man in the fleet that didn't know Sir Francis was his friend. He was great on discipline. But he did wrong—it was little less than murder that he did to Doughty."

"Who in hell was Doughty?"

There came a galloper through the mud and presently the guns began a long range duel in the dark against unseen batteries whose shells, however, fell short. There was nothing but the din to interfere with Tommy's story of how Doughty, using his own judgment, parted company from Drake in stormy weather on the Spanish Main, and how Drake tried and hanged him for it.

"Doughty was his closest friend, but if that had been all the defense that Doughty had, Sir Francis would have done wrong not to hang him. But the truth was, Drake resented Doughty's disobedience and called it treason, whereas actually Doughty had a perfect right to use his own judgment. If his judgment was wrong, Drake had the right to send him home as inefficient. Instead, he gave him a sort of trial and hanged him in the presence of his men. He'll have to live that down."

"Live it down?" said some one. "Is there anybody deader than Sir Francis Drake?"

"What of it? Do you kid yourselves a man is done with just because he dies a time or two? We keep on being reborn, finishing the jobs we skimped, meeting the men we cheated, making retribution, learning something, doing a bit better each time—maybe."

That began an argument that lasted all night, interrupted by whining and bursting shells and by Tommy's frequent absences, he and I taking turns to trudge the rounds. Most of the fellows agreed with me that one life on earth is plenty. We admitted to each other that we did not wish to come back and be forced to face the consequences of a number of things we did and did not do. But there was no persuading Tommy he was wrong, although the men joked him about it mercilessly.

"You'll be a railway signal next time, Tommy—have to stand saluting all the trains that go by."

"Useful, anyhow," he answered. "Peep o' day, by golly. Time to see what luck the cooks are having. Who wants to match for the last cigaret?"

He won the cigaret and walked off smoking it. He always did win everything that came within the sphere of plain luck, just as there was never a woman who could even half resist him. And he accepted both luck and women very much as most of us accept a change of weather, as something to be enjoyed without obligation.

* * *

NEVERTHELESS, his principles were of adamant and none knew better than Tommy Knott what obligation meant, whether or not it was self-imposed. In that sense he was Quixotic. He was as reckless and persistent a saver of human life as ever joined an army. He would dare machine gun fire in the teeth of standing orders to rescue a wounded man, thus giving the range to the enemy. Once, in plain view of a whole division, he came scrambling down a *kopje* carrying a wounded officer with whom he had quarreled three days previously. The unfortunate part of that was, that the officer was shot dead as he lay on Tommy's shoulders, saving Tommy's life undoubtedly.

"Damn!" he remarked to me when stretcher bearers came to carry away the dead man. "Dying for somebody else is not so easy as it looks."

When that day's advance was made good Tommy was sent for by the brigadier commanding our wing. He was mercilessly reprimanded in the presence of a dozen officers and as many orderlies.

"Don't you know, young man, that Victoria Crosses are not given for grandstand plays? You threw away a valuable man's life for the sake of applause. I would reduce you to the ranks if I weren't so short of officers. Get back to your troop, and remember: no medals for gallery play in disobedience to standing orders!"

Tommy swallowed and saluted. Then he said what went into the brigadier's report and stood against him until the war's end, so that the British army lost a first class general, although it kept as fiery and true an officer as ever took the field:

"Just so that you may understand me, sir, I care so little about medals that I've never given them a thought. As it is, since you've seen fit to say what you did, I ask to be excused from ever accepting or wearing a medal of any kind."

He escaped court-martial solely, I believe, because it was thought the Australians might mutiny if he were sent to the rear in disgrace on such a charge as that. But his loyalty was evermore in doubt, and though he reached the rank of colonel that step was only given him when the armistice was signed and ranking officers were needed to take the unruly Australian contingent home. Furthermore, he kept his word; he never wore a medal, though he was entitled to half a dozen. And I think he never gave to any one, excepting me, one word of explanation. He was brief at that.

"Funny, isn't it? No matter how often I try, I can't seem to wipe out that crime the Gypsy woman spoke of. You'd have thought a three-year war would give a chap a chance."

I saw the ships again, one signaling and one downwind. But, curiously as it seems now, I did not think of Doughty and Sir Francis Drake, although the ships were such as they two took to sea to carry havoc among the Dons in the name of Queen Elizabeth. And I knew how thoroughly Tommy believed he had had a hand in that game in a former life. If I had believed in reincarnation, I might have put two and two together, but that is something that we seldom do when our own pet prejudices interfere.

* * *

I HAVE just returned from Tommy's funeral. I have buried my best friend on a hill in sight of the Pacific. He and I went into partnership after the Boer War and for awhile we tried mining in Australia, but we had no success worth mentioning until we came to the United States and staked the claims that later on grew famous as the Golden Hind. It was Tommy, of course, who gave the mine that name, in memory of the ship in which Sir Francis Drake once sailed around the world. He named it with quite a bit of Old World ceremony on the day when we shipped our first carload of ore.

I can see him now, bare headed, ruddy in the afternoon sun, quoting with almost a choke in his voice those lines of Keats on first opening Chapman's Homer. When he came to the "Silent on a peak in Darien" he was not dry eyed. I knew it and I looked the other way, because Tommy would rather go naked than betray sentimental emotion.

He had grown a beard in those days, ruddy auburn, curling to a point, and he looked so like the old engravings of Sir Francis Drake that one could easily imagine him in a steel corselet and helmet with a rapier in his right hand, having at the Dons. However, when I showed him an engraving he professed that he could not see the resemblance. I feel sure, though, that he did see it, only it was no part of his vanity to claim a facial resemblance to a hero; he was bent on bettering Drake's record for the sake of his own exacting conscience and he cared for nothing less than for the world's recognition, although he gave his earnings to the world, and mine, too, sometimes faster than he could bank them. Though the mine paid like a plundered city Tommy and I were constantly in debt because he insisted on altruistic schemes that would have beggared Crœsus.

So we quarreled, almost overnight. The trouble was that, though he could trust a friend to the hilt and to the last ditch, that friend had to obey him. He would brook no equal in command. He would have been perfectly willing to give me far more than my fair share of the proceeds of the mine, but he could not endure that I should hold his principles in question and he had to make use of prodigies of self-control when I taxed him with throwing our money away.

There was a smoldering mutual irritation for a long time, but it did not blaze up until I suggested to him, late one night in the shack near the head of the shaft, that we should hire a manager who understood the business and let him run the mine.

For a moment I thought he would try to kill me, but he reined that impulse, pacing up and down before the hot stove like a caged lion, meeting my eyes each time he turned and knotting his right fist as though it clutched a sword hilt.

"I might have known you'd turn on me at last," he said.

But I did not answer. I could see those ships again, more clearly than ever, one away down to leeward and the others close hauled to a howling wind. It was the ship to leeward that seemed personal to me; I thought the captain of that ship was acting wisely in running southward before the rising gale. I thought the other two ships wrong to try to hold their westward course. But it is useless to try to explain how intimate such an imagined picture is—as useless as it was to try to argue Tommy Knott into tolerance of what he considered treason.

"You!" he remarked. "After all these years!"

So I stuck to my point and told him frankly I would have my way, for his own sake as well as mine.

"You shall have it," he said. "I give you my share. I'll be damned before I'll let you say I beat you out of anything."

Anger between friend and friend is worse than the malice of fifty enemies. I said he had nothing I needed, least of all a sense of fair play. He might give his half to some one who would thank him for it; I would keep mine but appoint a manager. At that he stalked away into the night, I think to keep his hands from having at me, and I did not see him again for three whole months, during which he left me in undisturbed control.

At the end of thirty days I had appointed a manager, who in less than two months had proved himself as tactless with the men as he was inefficient in other ways. He fired a dozen of our loyal old grumblers and promoted strangers in their place who turned out to be trouble makers of the worst type, experts in the art of stirring animosity and misrepresenting the facts. I fired the manager, but it was too late. On the day he left there was a ghastly accident, due to carelessness. The accident was promptly followed by a strike, in which I had to bear the brunt of ill will studiously worked up and encouraged by rumors to the effect that I had deliberately got rid of Tommy Knott in order to neglect the safety of the men in favor of my own pocketbook. The men swore they would not return to work until Tommy Knott took charge again. They found out where he was and sent a deputation to interview him. He declined to receive the deputation; told them they should go to me. The bitterness against me was easy to inflame after that, as I don't doubt Tommy knew it would be.

TIME hung heavy. There was nothing to do but stick it out and read, waiting for the men to come to their senses and accept my offer of arbitration. Tommy, I knew, was waiting for me to eat crow and invite him to return. For days on end I pondered how to make my peace with him without surrendering the self-respect that meant as much to me as it did to him.

I searched memory for incidents to throw light on his character and indicate the likeliest means of restoring harmony and, knowing he believed himself to have been Sir Francis Drake in a former life, I read through "Hakluyt's Voyages", which Tommy almost knew by heart; if he in truth were imitating Drake I might discover a suitable line of approach. Thinking I had done so, I made another mistake. I wired to him:

> IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU TO FLINCH FROM A FIGHT. I AM FACING THE ENEMY. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

He may have misinterpreted the message, but I think not. I believe he understood it perfectly. At any rate, he acted on it that same day. It was characteristic of him that he never in his whole life called on the law to interfere in his behalf —he would have thought that cowardice and proof that he could not manage his own affairs—but he believed in getting men's opinion on his side, although it had to yield to his.

He arrived at the mine that evening and without coming near me invited the men to a conference. Uninvited, I went to the conference, torn between indignation and a yearning to be friends again with Tommy on almost any terms. He and I faced each other in silence across a campfire; there were upward of two hundred men in a ring around us, all of them staring at Tommy and me; they were like ghosts whose eyes shone in the firelight. It was cold. They were growing gaunt and lean. I dare say some of them were famished.

It was a long time before Tommy spoke, and when he did he merely asked the men whether they thought a halved command was good for any undertaker. If not, they should say which leader they preferred. I was given no chance to speak. I stood condemned that instant. It was unanimous. They cheered him and they execrated me. There came a yell from some one in the safety of the outer darkness:

"Run him off the lot! To hell with him!"

Tommy strode around the fire toward me, I have no doubt whatever with the purpose of protecting me from violence. But he had done his worst and even that move was interpreted as intention on his part to use his fists. I was the bigger. They may have thought I might give him the worst of it. At any rate—

"Kill him!" some one shouted.

It appeared to dawn on Tommy suddenly that he had sentenced me to death, and he rushed to my aid. We were mobbed but the men hung back when they discovered Tommy fighting with me. Tommy snatched a brand out of the fire and cleared a circle with the aid of that. In the ensuing pause he began to talk to them, but some one in the darkness threw a rock that struck me in the face. It staggered me a bit and drew blood, but the damage was nothing serious; however, Tommy stepped in front of me. A second rock, heavier, thrown harder by an unseen hand, struck Tommy straight between the eyes and crushed his skull. He fell dead into my arms.

Death has a way of ending more than

arguments. The anger against me ceased as suddenly as it had risen and even the strike was ended by that night's tragedy. If anybody knew who threw the rock that killed him, no one told. We watched for a clue, believing the culprit might stay away from the funeral; however, no man stayed away. It was men from the mine who dug the grave, miners who lowered him into it. I read the burial service.

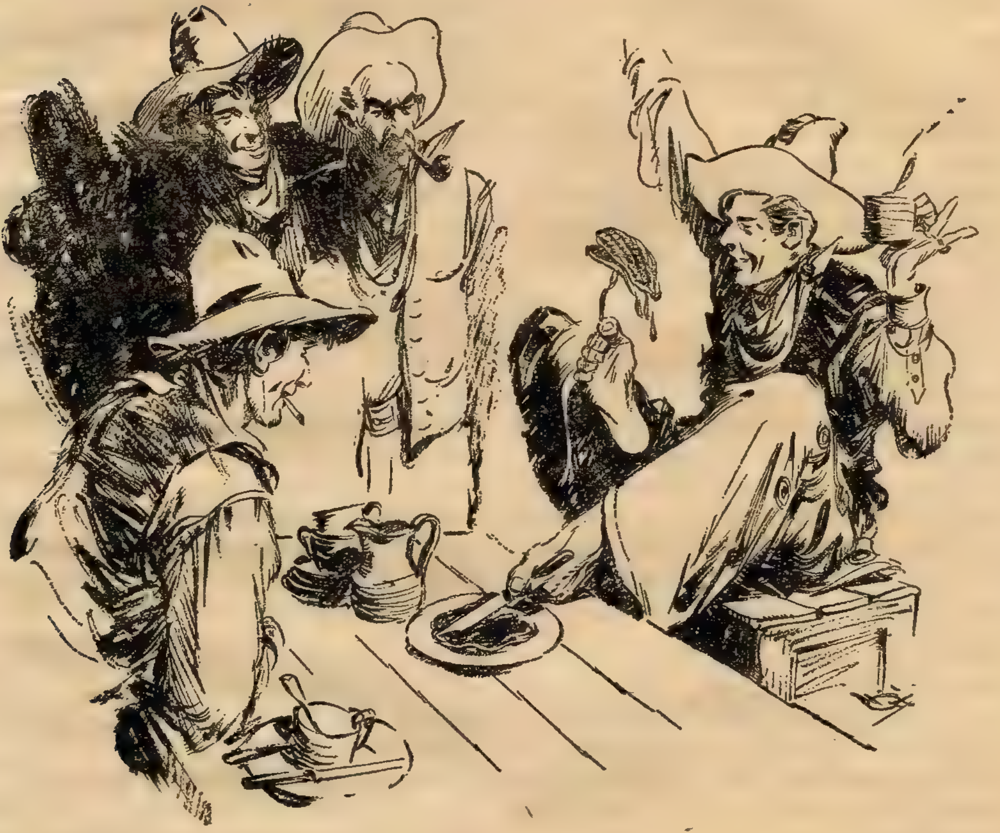
As I read it I saw those ships again, one running downwind. Then, as I stooped to pick up earth to throw on the plain pine coffin I saw, as clearly as one sometimes sees in dreams, a man who might be Tommy Knott in armor walking beside another man toward a tree, between two lines of armed Elizabethan seamen standing at salute. Imagination plays strange tricks. The faces of the men around the grave were not unlike those seamen's faces. There was a gnarled tree near, so old that it had lost its larger branches except one that stuck out, pointing like an index finger at the open grave. And in the vision that I saw there was a noose over the bough of the tree; the bough was similarly shaped, although the tree looked green and young. The man who walked, not swiftly but with chin held high, beside the man in armor seemed to me to be an image of myself; but the backs of both men were toward me and I don't know how I recognized them, any more than I can find words to explain how clear it seemed that they were Drake and Doughty, and at the same time Tommy and myself.

As I have said, I never was convinced of Tommy's theory that we are reborn, that we may repay wrong that we have done. And I have seen and heard old Gypsy women talking nonsense for a gold or silver coin. I don't know why a Gypsy should have any understanding of life that is over the heads of the rest of us.

Nevertheless, I can't help wondering whether Tommy Knott was not Sir Francis Drake, and whether or not I was Walter Doughty, Drake's best friend whom he hanged for a breach of discipline. And I can't help wondering whether Tommy knew, or thought he knew that I was Doughty. Certainly he never said so. He may not even have suspected it.

OVERTRAINED

By HARRY G. HUSE



A Tale of a Cowboy Contortionist

THERE was (said the old cowman) something to be said all right for this here Boy Scout movement.

Of course Montana'd managed to get herself partly settled up and her Injuns killed off without them. But there wasn't no telling how much quicker and better the job'd been done if the roughnecks'd had better early training.

Feller on the raddio there drawed it a little strong, calling it a new Golden Rule religion and the salvation of the human race. Members of the same don't really take no interest in salvation till they got too doddering to find any pleasure waving messages with bandanners or making fire rubbing a couple of sticks.

It was a good plan, probably, learning the younguns to do a good turn every day.

Only there was times when it was kind of hard on the grownups. Like Old Bill

Hixon, the sheepman, last winter down to Pasadena—Boy Scouts so thick you couldn't spit 'thout having to sight careful between them. Had a sore toe, Bill, from kicking the cat in the dark and missing, and there for a spell he carried a cane when he went out. Meant to lean on it now and ag'in when the toe got to aching; used it principally to chase off the young whippersnappers that was bound to help him cross every street.

There was plenty of good sense, he granted, in the motto the raddio fellow made so much fuss about—"Be Prepared". It ought to have been the Montana State motto. Wasn't a single steamboat hand or bull puncher working out of Fort Benton in the old days that hadn't a pocket gimlet and a bundle of straws for tapping the whisky bar'ls.

Be Prepared! That was Ed Hellums's motto, though Ed wasn't really educated enough to put it into them words. Be Prepared! That was Ed Hellums all over. Talk about your city boys knowing how to box the compass and track a grizzly and tie a hangman's knot! Ed was prepareder than that. Ed was most the preparedest man you'd ever know. (The old cowman cleared his throat.)

Born and raised in this country, Ed, and come to a man's estate and a job for me horse wrangling 'thout having had no educational or cultural influences to speak of, brought to bear on him. That didn't mean though that he wasn't accomplished.

Was part Injun—only about an eighth—and built like a Greek god would of been if he'd had a strain of Blackfoot to narrow him down in the hips and ga'nt him up in the belly. Feller that was visiting here one time from New York called him an Eastern school teacher's impassioned dream of what a cowboy ought to look like.

You'd naturally expect him, being good looking thataway, to be real vain of his appearance. He did come to us fixed up pretty, with lots of silver doodads on his saddle and leather pants. But that was jest the Injun workin' out in him. He didn't spend no more time admirin' his shadow than the average cowpuncher.

I guess he never really realized that he was downright handsome. In them days there wasn't many lookin' glasses in a horse wrangler's life. Them that was was so flawed you'd have to reach up and take hold of your nose and wiggle it to be certain it wasn't broken. Anyway Ed's mind, which wasn't able to hold very much at one time, was all took up with his other accomplishments, which was many and varied.

The thing he was proudest of, probably because that was where he got his start, was being able to throw most everything in his body out of joint. First off, when he was a youngun gitting what little schoolin' he had, it'd been jest his thumbs. The right one, he claimed, come easy. Seemed like it'd slip out of its own accord when he was cracking his knuckles. The left one took considerable practise. But he'd kept at it patient until he could work it jest like the other.

Once he'd mastered the thumbs he'd moved on to his fingers, and then to other joints. He could throw out a shoulder blade when he was only twelve. They took big, them tricks, among the handful of ranchers' kids he went to school with. He hadn't done no good at his studies. But he got more'n his share of attention at recess time and when the teacher's back was turned.

He'd been set to work riding fence for his old man when it become evident he wasn't porous to school education. With plenty of time off by hisself thataway he'd learned a lot of other arts, and could presently spit nine different ways and howl like a coyote.

'Bout the time he commenced to go stale and was lookin' for new tricks to master a one-horse circus come to Benton. Ed run off and traveled forty miles to see it. He got the larrupin' of his life from Old Man Hellums when he come back. But he'd picked up a lot of inspiration off'n a acrobat and a no-armed man in the sideshow. Inside six months after he seen the circus he could scratch hisself between the shoulder blades with either heel and handle a knife and fork real handy with his toes.

E YOU GOT to remember how hard up this country was for entertainment in them days to understand how popular these accomplishments of Ed's made him. He was sure welcome that year on the roundup. Most all the fellers there'd gone in more or less for self-improvement and could roll a cigaret with one hand and spin a rope and braid horsehair bridles. But Ed's got so's he could put on a program three nights hand running 'thout repeating.

We sure enjoyed him, as I say, there on the roundup that summer. It was real restful comin' in from a hard day's ridin' to have Ed there ready and eager to give a imitation of a dogfight or to shuck off his boots and socks and polish off a mess of flapjacks with his feet. We was proud of him too when we had visitors. Like when we had this feller from the East I mentioned who was making sketches. We'd git Ed to perform for him every night, and he jest ate it up.

For all his accomplishments though there was one trick Ed hadn't been able to master. He'd seen fellers that wasn't half as good as him that'd been able to do it since they was boys without half tryin'. That was make his scalp move back and forth, and his ears move with it. Ed had tried and tried, and still wasn't able to do it, and it saddened him up considerable.

It was the general impression among the fellers that the trouble lay in his bein' part Injun. All Injuns had their scalps fastened on their heads, they claimed, tighter'n white men. It was a case of nature giving them extra toughness where it was most needed.

You'd see Ed, when he wasn't doin' nothin' else, with his face all screwed up and his hands openin' and closin', tryin' his best to twitch his scalp like a horse twitchin' flies. He'd work at it till the veins in his forehead'd git all big and fiery and the tears'd come to his eyes. But so far he hadn't got no farther than jest to make his hair tremble a little.

This feller from the East done a lot for the whole outfit, givin' them new ambitions. They hadn't hardly had none before that 'cept jest kind of loose ones that didn't go much beyond the buyin' of a new saddle or havin' a big time the next payday.

This feller brought out a book that'd been wrote some time before and was being read, he claimed, by everybody in the East. It was the grandpaw of all the Western romances and cowboy movin' pitchers. We hadn't had none of that class of literature up to that point. Most everything that'd been wrote about us before made us out to be 'bout one step up from the Injuns which we was supposed to shoot and scalp every day for pastime.

It was the story of a refined girl that come West and fell in love with a cowboy that didn't look refined but turned out after all to have a pure, manly heart in his boozom, and raised hell with a villain.

A lot's been said about the effect of that book on the refined and romantic young ladies of the more effete sections. I've heard it claimed that's still what makes it so easy to git school teachers from way off to come out here and teach in rural districts. But there ain't been enough said about its effect on the ploddin', commonplace cowboy.

Up to then, at least round here, he hadn't thought about hisself being nothin' more'n a feller that worked like hell for a spell and then had as good a time as he was able. He hadn't felt noble or had his sights set no higher'n a waitress, or maybe some squawman's daughter.

The book changed all that. The fellers studied it over till it was plumb wore out from handlin'. You could see it gittin' in its work in the dreaming look in their eyes and the way some of them give up chewing tobacco.

It seemed like it got to Ed worse'n the rest, him always havin' been more forward lookin' and prepared-like. It give him somethin' definite to work for. He didn't jest set round dreamin'. He got to work learnin' new things, and polishin' off them on which he was still not perfect. This was the time when he learned how to drink a glass of whisky standin' on his head, and neigh like a stallion.

Ed got some help on his only weakness from this Eastern feller the day he was leavin' to go back to New York. He took Ed aside and told him he'd jest heard from some of the other fellers how he was havin' trouble with one of his tricks, and guessed, having once studied anatomy, he could help him. Motions of the scalp and organs attached to same, he said, started way down in the neck. Likely his difficulty was due to a slackness around the Adam's apple. Reckoned that if Ed'd git hisself a big lump of alum and rub hisself there every night he'd pucker up after awhile and the trick wouldn't be no harder for him than it was for a pack mule.

WELL, I didn't have no work for Ed that fall, so he drifted northwest and went to work for the Bannisters, up above Browning. I didn't see nothin' of him for a couple of years. Then I happened to be up in that direction and stopped in to pay Alf Bannister a visit. There was Ed Hellums, handsomer'n ever, and settin' pretty.

He'd found his Eastern heroine, and she plumb come up in appearance to the one in the book. Daughter of a Chicago stockman Alf done business with when he went East with cattle. Girl about twenty-two, out to see the West and git over a love affair with a feller she'd give up because he wasn't manly. Stayin' at the ranch-house and riding off every day on expeditions with Ed actin' as guide, at her special request.

They come ridin' up to the house shortly after I got there. The girl couldn't seem to take her eyes off Ed. He did look like somebody out'n a pitcher, setting on his horse easy and graceful-like, serious and sayin' nothin'.

She got me off to one side the first opportunity to talk about him. She felt encouraged to do so, me being one of his old friends.

Wasn't he a splendid feller, she asked, not givin' me a chance to answer. Wasn't he the true Western type? So strong and silent! So lean and handsome! So reserved, and every inch a man! Too reserved sometimes, she almost thought. He didn't talk much. He didn't talk hardly at all. He didn't do nothin' but jest ride along on his horse beside her. That was a sign, though, of his deep nature. When he did speak she was certain it would be somethin' vital and important—somethin' as vital and basic as these great towerin' mountains. What a relief he was after the men she'd known back East who were triflin', conceited posers, always tryin' to show off how good they was!

Ed, he got me off to one side too, the same evenin'. Made out in the beginnin' like he jest wanted to have a visit for old time's sake. Said he was comin' along fine. Yes, sir, everythin' was movin' along fine and dandy. The Bannisters was fine folks to work for. He liked them real fine. Been showing a lot of fine improvement his own self. Was sure grateful to that feller what's-his-name that'd visited us from New York.

He couldn't git no farther'n this, though, without gittin' on to the subject that was on his mind. He was jest plumb nutty, he allowed, about this here girl. Had I noticed her? Didn't I think she was jest fine too? She had him plumb off his feed. Couldn't eat hardly nothin'. Couldn't sleep. Couldn't seem to say or do nothin' when he was with her.

Here they was, he said, riding off up into the mountains every day together. She prettier and finer even than the girl in the book. Lakes and trees and mountain scenery! Half of Montana spread out at their feet. Him that was all prepared and hadn't never before failed to be interestin' in any company, jest tongue tied and paralyzed. Not able to do nothin' but set his horse and say "git up" and point now and then at a mountain and say to the girl, "Lookit there."

She'd got him plumb buffaloed, he allowed, and here he was, helpless, jest when he needed to be doing his best to make a good impression on her. She'd talked to him a plenty about the kind of men she'd gone with back East, and he could figger out all right from what she said that she found him awkward and with no social graces and timid where he ought to be bold and forward.

I told him from what I'd seen he already had her as good as won if he'd only take hold of things and show a little more courage. She's jest waitin' for you, I tells him, to sweep her off her feet. Pick your time when the scenery and settin' is romantic, and do your best.

He says he'll sure do it, and it's fine of me to be so helpful and give him such fine advice. But he don't act on it, at least not for a week. They'll go out every mornin' on their expeditions, and every night they'll both come back from their day together in the mountains, lookin' more lovesick and unhappy than ever.

It's gittin' along toward time for the girl to be going back East, and I've plumb lost patience with Ed. Then one night they set up later'n the rest of us, out on the big veranda. The Bannister house sets on the edge of timber up a pretty mountain valley. You can look plumb down this valley on to the bench, a dozen miles away. Back behind you is the dark pines, with a big peak rising up behind them, and other peaks with snow on them notching the skyline right and left.

There's a big Montana moon this night, coming up out of the bench at the mouth of the valley. It's already lightin' up the sides of the mountains. Everything's plumb still and pretty.

I can hear them two on the porch. She's doin' all the talkin' that's bein' done. The moon gits higher. Presently they come down off the veranda and move along slow till they're standin' by the gate under my window, lookin' off down through the foothills.

It's a wonderful night, I tell you. It's got me going, jest watching them two. You can see miles and miles, with everything kind of sparklin' in the moonlight. It's got hold of the girl and she throws her arms out wide, like she wanted to float off into the night. She's got on a soft white dress with bare arms, and there in the moonlight she was a pitcher. I can hear poor Ed catch his breath.

I hear Ed gasp ag'in, and swaller like a horse, and see him clench and unclench his hands, and know his courage is takin' hold of him.

He swallers hard ag'in, and gits hisself in hand. Then he moves closer to her, and reaches out half timid and half manly, and takes her arm and faces her towards him.

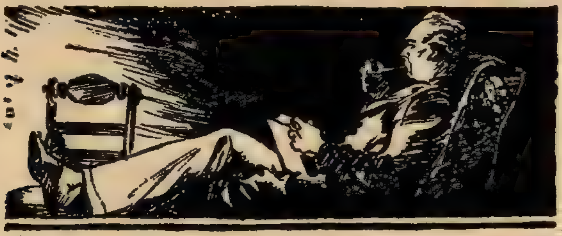
"Miss Mazie," he says, real soft and hopeful and tender. "Miss Mazie! You want I should show you how I can waggle my ears?"

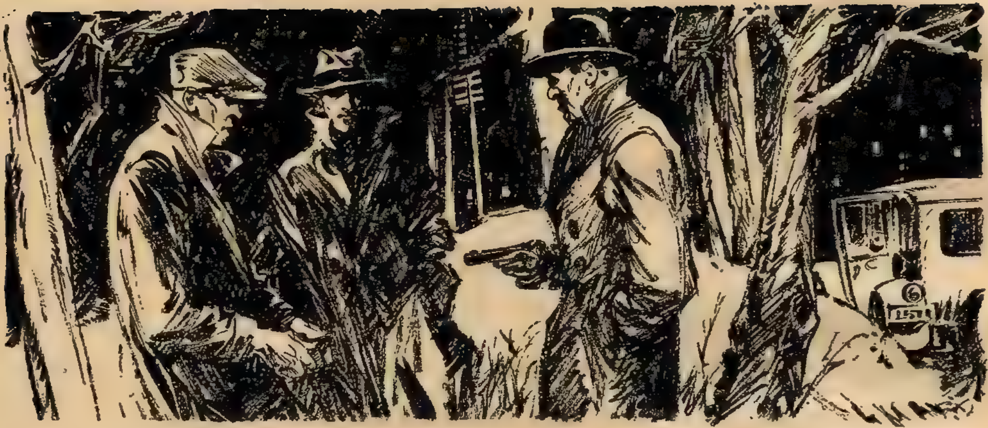
CHAINED

By BILL ADAMS

IT'S pleasant to sit of an evening, with the woman and kids around,
In the warm bright glow of the firelight. It's good to hear the sound
Of the little children's laughter. And the woman's smile is sweet.
And the old black dog lies, dozing, contented by my feet.
And the fire leaps up and crackles. The firelight shadows sway,
And there's peace and love and laughter to end the winter's day.
And I bid good night to the children and I kiss the women's lips,
And the dog goes off to his kennel, and my shoulder gently slips
More deeply into the cushions. My feet are far outspread,
And the flames die down, and I'm staring into the embers red.
And I hear without in the darkness, hard on the window pane,
The gusty wind of winter, the hiss of the falling rain,
And my lids droop over my dreamy eyes—*and I am free again!*
The drear wind wails more wildly. The rain is changed to hail.
Dim o'er my vision there passes the loom of a ghostly sail.
A sea breaks over the railing. I hear the skipper shout:
"Get the braces clear for running! Stand by to put her about!"
A sailor crew is shouting. The mate goes running past.
I hear the great spars groaning as they swing on the towering mast.
Lightning leaps from the blackness. The night is a sudden roar,

As we're caught a-back in the fury a thousand miles offshore.
All night we toil and labor, all night we drag and haul,
All night the wild sea woman mocks; the darkness like a pall.
High in the inky blackness the stern, sharp orders ring.
High in the storm's harsh clamor I hear a sailor sing—
And the door is quietly opened and my woman comes softly in.
Her fingers are on my fingers. Her cheek is close to mine.
Her hair is a dusky sweetness. Like tropic stars the shine
Of her radiant eyes in the firelight. Her words are low and clear,
And I start and stare at her lovely face as she murmurs, "I love you, dear."
As hand in hand we turn away from by the dying fire
My first wild mistress whispers me. *The sea is my desire!*





DEAD MAN'S ROAD

A Story of the Chicago Gangs

By WILLIAM FORT

"SO YOU got here, eh?"

Jerry Clancy himself had opened the door. He stepped back to allow the three men to enter his apartment, his thick lips set in a sneering smile as he watched his two subordinates shove Andy Jordan ahead of them into the room.

"Yeh. We're here."

George Frick's pop-eyes squinted at Clancy through the half gloom, as he eased his big bulk into a chair by the table. He rubbed his flat, ugly nose vigorously and picked up a paper, taking no further notice of any one.

Clancy strode heavily to the table, poured three drinks into dirty glasses and downed one himself. A giant of a man, he loomed in the dim light of the apartment like an upright bear.

"Here, have a drink. Everything all right, Joe?"

Joe Gallio, sipping his drink, regarded his boss with dark, shifty eyes. He was a small, dark skinned fellow, not more than twenty-five.

"Sure. Everything's jake." His small, cruel mouth smiled thinly as he shoved back a litter of papers and empty glasses and sat on the end of the table.

"That's fine. That's fine."

Clancy rocked back and forth on his heels as he puffed the stub of a cigar into life. He flicked a smear of ashes from his soiled shirt front and grinned down at Andy Jordan.

"So-o, they showed you your girl."

His voice was soft as the purr of a cat. Little more than half Clancy's size, Andy stared up at him from the depths of the overstuffed chair where he had thrown himself. When he did not reply, Clancy jerked a chair around facing him and sat down. He placed a tapping finger on Andy's knee as he talked.

"I told you yesterday," he went on, "Al Jackson's goin' for a ride tonight—an' you're takin' him. Then you had to get nasty, an' I had to show you who was boss. See?"

He crossed his fat legs, lifting one carefully to a position of comfort across the other. Andy looked up dully, but not directly at Clancy. His gaze shifted from Gallio on the edge of the table, paring his nails with a gold pen knife, to Frick, buried behind the newspaper. Clancy's sneering face leaned close, his eyes bloodshot from drink, his lips curled back above discolored teeth. Andy looked at him with contempt.

"You lousy yellow rat!" His voice shook with anger. "Pick on a girl! You're yellow!"

"Dolly's safe enough." Clancy laughed harshly. "Wasn't hurt, was she? Didn't I have Joe and George, here, take you to see she was all right? But—" he fixed Andy with a cold eye—"she stays right where she is till you get this job done! I'm boss, see? An' you gotta learn to do what you're told."

"Why the hell do you have to pick on me?" Andy demanded. "I ain't a killer. You know that. Ain't I played square with you? Murder— Lord, that ain't my line." He flung himself from the chair. "Al's a friend of mine, I tell you! Why make me do it? Why the hell don't you do your own murders?"

"You better shut up," Gallio warned him.

"Let 'im alone." Clancy chewed his cigar, frowning. "Why I do things I ain't sayin'," he went on, to Andy. "It just fits in with my plans, see, to have you bump Jackson. Now, you say yes an' the girl stays O. K. Otherwise, she's mine."

Andy stared at the floor. When he spoke it was in a low voice, almost a whisper.

"You win, Jerry."

"Sure." Clancy grinned. "I always do."

"You win—now. But don't take me for a fool! You ain't kiddin' me. I go out with George, here, and we bump off Jackson. But I ain't dumb, Jerry. You ain't plannin' to let me get away either. I get mine, somehow. I'll do the job tonight, but I'm comin' back. Get me? I'm goin' to kill Jackson for you, Clancy, but when I get back, if Dolly ain't there waitin' for me—" his eyes, hot with murder, looked up into Clancy's—"if she ain't there, Jerry, then I'm goin' to kill you, tonight."

Clancy turned a smirking face toward the others.

"Didn't I tell you he was smart? G'wan, coot!" He shoved Andy away from him contemptuously. "You're talkin' like a boy scout. Sit down now, while I give you the layout. If you want a try at me after the party's over, come ahead. You won't be the first one. C'mon, let's have a drink."

He downed one himself and passed the bottle around. He seemed pleased when Andy took a swallow.

"That's the stuff," he boomed, clapping Andy on the shoulder. "It's a cold night. You'll need it. Listen, kid, you got nothin' to worry about, see? I ain't askin' you to do nothin' I wouldn't do myself. Just like I said lots of times, Andy, you're a good guy and I can use you. But you got to take orders, see? Now no hard feelin's, and don't worry none about that dame. She's safe as a lily."

Andy stared at him.

"She better be," he said, finally.

Clancy laughed, embarrassed, and pulled out a fresh cigar.

"She will be," he said. "Now listen—an' listen good," he went on, his voice hardening. "You don't do nothin' tonight, see? An' you don't say nothin'. You pick up Jackson—you and Frick. Frick'll do the talkin' All you do is sit—till you get the word. Then you get out of the car an' George'll give you back your rod, an' when he gives you the high sign you bore 'im, see? Don't try no damn' funny business either, because George'll have you covered. Remember that, kid; you'll have Jackson covered, an' George'll have you covered." He chuckled, then went on, "Why I want you to do the job is none of your business. That's up to me. An' what happens to you after that—that's up to me, too. But if you care anything about your own skin or this dame of yours, don't make no slips. Now let's get goin'." He went to the table and poured himself another drink. "Joe, you take Andy an' go out to the car and wait. I got something to say to George. An' listen, you," he said, waving a stubby finger at Andy, "no funny business."

Andy looked at him while he buttoned up his coat.

"I'll do what I said, Jerry."

They stared at each other for a few seconds, but it was Clancy's eyes which shifted finally, as Andy turned and preceded Joe Gallio out the door.

When they had gone Clancy placed a thick paw on Frick's arm.

"No slip-ups now, George. I can't have no slip-ups."

"What the hell? Forget it. You're jumpy. Do we bump the kid or not?"

Clancy poured another drink and gulped it down.

"Sure," he said. "That's all arranged. Joe and a couple more will be somewhere around, in another car." His lips stretched into a smile. "No, sir, don't miss the kid. What the hell do you think I'm sendin' him out there for?"

Frick shrugged his shoulders into his coat.

"Sounds like damn' foolishness to me, but I should worry. You're the boss."

"Sure," Clancy repeated, "I'm the boss. Don't forget that, George."

CLANCY watched the door close. He tried it to make sure it was locked, then turned to the room Frick had just left. A litter of papers, cigaret butts, cigar stubs and ashes covered the floor. A dirty towel hung across the back of a chair, and on the couch in the corner an old suit, a tie or two, and other soiled articles of clothing lay in disorder.

"This ain't no place for a lady," he muttered, and set to work to clean it up.

He tossed the clothes into a closet and shut the door. The cigar and cigaret butts he brushed under the couch, using his hand as a broom, and piled the papers together on an end of the table. Empty glasses and bottles he carried to the kitchen and deposited in the sink which was already half filled with dishes. Clancy lived alone, and he was no housekeeper. He rubbed at the rings left by the glasses on the table top with the sleeve of his coat. He surveyed the results with approval.

"That's swell enough for any dame," he mumbled.

Turning his attention to his own appearance, he decided that that also might be improved. He shaved and put on a clean shirt, tucking in the collar, smirking at himself in the mirror, highly pleased. As he walked into the room which he called the back parlor and picked up the telephone, he was humming a tune to himself. He called a number.

"Hullo. . . . Chris? Clancy. . . . Yeah, that's right. How's the jane? . . . You ain't been in there, eh?" He laughed loudly. "That's right, Chris, you keep away from her. . . . Yeah, they're gone. Listen, her boy friend won't be back and I don't want her gettin' lonesome, see? . . . That's it. You buy a taxi and bring her over. . . . What? . . . She won't hurt you. Tell her you're bringin' her to Andy Jordan, see? An' tell the driver to step on it. . . ."

He hung up and licked his thick lips in satisfaction. He had her now. Good idea, gettin' rid of Andy that way. What was the old line? Sure—kill two guys with one stone. That was it. Andy getting rid of Jackson, and George taking care of Andy, both at once. He chuckled. Who said Jerry Clancy wasn't smart? Whistling softly, he got out a bottle of wine and two clean glasses, placing them on the table in the front room. The telephone rang. He jerked around nervously and picked it up. It was Joe, telling him they were starting out.

"Follow 'em," Clancy ordered. "Lay behind 'em enough so you won't be noticed, but keep your eyes open. George is all right, but I ain't trustin' nobody on this."

Instead of placing the receiver back on the hook he set it down on the table. He didn't mean to be annoyed by any telephone calls. Not with him expecting a lady. He went back and poured himself another drink. The neck of the bottle rattled against the side of the glass as he lifted them together. Murder was jumpy work, even for Clancy.

He settled down to await the arrival of Chris—Chris and the girl. Andy Jordan's girl. He'd do a lot for her. She'd be a damn' sight better off with him than marrying that punk, Jordan. He felt his chin and was glad he had remembered to shave. He poured himself another drink. He had three more. Damn' that wop! Why didn't he come? His watch said eleven o'clock. Oh, well. . . . Plenty of time; plenty of time. Idly he wondered how the "buggy ride" turned out. Andy should have had his by now. The thought made him feel more cheerful. Things would be different now. Andy's girl would be Jerry Clancy's woman now. He paced the floor and hummed another tune.

It was 11:30 when finally Chris arrived. He pushed Dolly ahead of him into the room.

"Where the hell you been?" Clancy growled.

"That damn' keed, she almos' kill me!" Chris, a swarthy Italian, stroked his cheek ruefully where the girl had scratched him, his piercing black eyes scowling at Dolly beneath shaggy brows. "She punch, she scratcha my face, she keek me. An' alla tha time she say, 'Whereabouts is my Andy?' 'How the hell do I know,' I tell her; an' she keek me again."

Clancy laughed.

"All right, Chris. You better get out now."

"Get out!" Chris was wrathful. "Tha hell you say! Mister Chris, he stay right here. I taka tha drink—so!"

Unbidden, he walked to the table and poured himself a double portion.

Might be a good idea, at that, Clancy thought, to have Chris stick around. Might need him. Never could tell. He called the Italian to one side.

"All right, Chris," he said, "stick around. But keep out of the way, see? Go back and go to sleep or something."

"Sure, Boss." Chris walked toward the back of the apartment, and Clancy turned to Dolly.

She was standing, aloof and uninterested, at the other side of the room.

"Well, baby," Clancy said genially, "this is great. Make yourself at home. This place is yours from now on." Dolly did not move. Clancy took in every detail of her trim figure hungrily. He walked over to her. "C'mon, give papa a nice kiss."

His bearlike arms swung her around and despite her struggles he pressed his wet lips against hers. She placed both hands against his face and pushed. With a laugh, Clancy let her go.

"All right, girlie. Plenty of time."

She backed away from him, pressing a hand against her lips, her dark eyes blazing.

"What have you done with Andy?" she demanded.

Clancy stepped toward her again.

"Now don't you worry none, baby." He leered at her drunkenly. "Don't worry. You think of me some, now. Come on, take off your coat and let's get friendly." He snatched her arm and when she jerked away he swept her to him with one arm while with the other hand he tore at the buttons of her coat.

"Let me go!" she said fiercely, struggling helplessly.

Her softness, the sight of her rounded shoulder showing beneath her thin dress excited him. He tried again to kiss her. She got one arm free and slapped him with all force. Over her shoulder Clancy caught sight of Chris. Attracted by the scuffling, he was standing in the doorway, scowling. Clancy loosed his hold and laughed, slightly embarrassed. He felt foolish.

"Ain't she the little spitfire, though!"

"She's good girl," Chris said stolidly. "She's my girl. And you damn' beega bum!"

"What d'ya mean, you lousy wop?" Clancy snarled, advancing toward the doorway where Chris was standing. Glowering, Chris came forward to meet him.

"Damn' beega bum!" he repeated.

With a snort of rage Clancy sprang at him. Kicking and slugging, they surged about the room.

AS ANDY walked out of Clancy's apartment with Joe Gallio he felt afraid, probably for the first time in his life. Afraid, not because he realized that his chances for making more than a one-way trip in that car were slim—the fact that he knew they intended to kill him did not trouble him—but a different sort of fear. The fear of life; a life that could make you witness horror, that could make you kill another man.

Climbing into the back seat of the sedan at Joe's direction, he felt suddenly very much alone. Joe got into the front seat, then turned and looked back at him. He had shifty eyes, but there was a certain amount of friendliness in them. Joe was glad he hadn't been assigned to Andy's job.

"Can the gloom, pal. It ain't so bad. You got plenty guts. Don't lose 'em now." He leaned back against the door, perching his feet on top of the steering wheel.

"I ain't losing nothin'."

Andy dug his hands deep into his pockets and slid farther down on his spine. Joe shrugged, took out a match and picked his teeth with it. They sat thus in silence until Frick appeared, crossing the sidewalk from the apartment entrance.

"So long, kid," Joe said then. He untwined his feet from the steering post and slouched off down the street.

Squinting against the glare from the arc light across the street, Frick peered into the sedan.

"Do you drive, bud?" he asked.

"You know damn' well I do," Andy growled.

"Then get over there and do your stuff," Frick ordered. "Drive where I tell you and do as I say. I'll have my rod by me, so don't try to get funny. Now let's get goin'. Drive straight ahead." He climbed into the back seat and slammed the door.

When Andy got the word to slow up he saw Jackson coming across the sidewalk, out of the shadows of a building, to meet them. Frick was saying rapidly, in an undertone:

"When he's in, drive west to Western and then south to 97th, then west again. Get that?"

Andy nodded. The next moment Frick had opened the rear door and slammed it shut again behind a slim man of about Andy's height, who sank back on the cushions with a sigh of relief.

"I thought you was never coming," he said, shivering. "Lord, it's cold. Well, look who's here. Hullo, Andy."

Andy grunted a surly response.

"What the hell's the matter with him?" Jackson asked Frick. "Gettin' high hat, ain't he?"

"He's sore because he has to work tonight," Frick laughed. "He'll get over it."

Andy made no reply. He felt ill—sick at his stomach. He watched the two of them in such glimpses as he could catch in the driving mirror. Frick with his heavy cruel face and his flat nose. Jackson, slim and good looking, with friendly, quick eyes. Poor devil! Poor devils, he amended, smiling grimly to himself, for Andy Jordan was taking the same ride. He jerked the wheel viciously to avoid hitting a car that turned in from a side street. The car swerved dangerously on the slippery, ice covered pavements.

"You damn' fool!" The car had jounced into a rut and Frick had bumped his head. "Watch where you're going."

"Go to hell!" Andy muttered, and swung north into Clark Street, turning west again into Randolph. He heard Frick being over-nice to Jackson.

"Ain't seen you lately," he was saying. "Where you been?"

Jackson laughed easily.

"Busy," he said, "giving the girls a treat."

"These dames!" Frick's tone was admiring. "They sure fall for you. I suppose," he went on smoothly, "after tonight's job we won't be seein' you again for a while. You always was good at the disappearin' act."

Ignorant of Frick's irony, Jackson launched upon an account of his recent adventures. Andy's spirits sank. This suspense made him nervous and jumpy. He tried to think of a way out of the mess, but couldn't. He wished he wasn't so dumb. He wished Frick and Jackson could change names. It wouldn't hurt his conscience any to kill Frick, he decided. He had to get out of this alive, somehow. He *had* to. He thought of Dolly as he had last seen her—a captive, awaiting, he suspected, the pleasure of Clancy. God! He had to get back. Unconsciously he said a prayer, though he did not recognize it as such.

"Lord! Just one little chance! Just one little break! Just one."

A remark from the rear seat caught his ear. They had turned south into Western Avenue.

"What the hell is this job tonight, George? Where we goin'?"

In the mirror, Andy saw Frick's eyes tighten, saw the suggestion of a sneer below the flat nose.

"We're takin' you to meet the boss, out south. He'll tell you where to go, I guess." Frick laughed, and the sound of it sent prickles down Andy's spine. "What's the matter? Think we was takin' you for a ride or something?"

Jackson's answering laugh held a tinge of nervousness. Andy tried to catch his eye in the mirror. If only he could give him a sign somehow. A sign that there were the two of them! But Jackson was looking out the car window, staring from his corner at the buildings as they slid past. Frick had pulled out a cigar. He sat in the other corner, his big frame looming black against the white pane of the rear window. He had pushed his hat to the back of his head.

The buildings were getting fewer, the lights less bright. They were drawing near the southern edge of town. It was bright moonlight. There had been a light fall of snow the day before, and against this white blanket, buildings reared in black relief. Frozen sleet, worn into humps and valleys by passing cars, crackled beneath the tires.

"Lord!"

The exclamation came softly, but its intensity caused Andy to shiver. Simultaneously there was the sound of a scuffle. Few houses now, and those far apart. Andy swung the car west in 97th Street. He watched the struggle as best he could in the mirror, but the light was dim and all he could make out was two shapes in silhouette in the moonlight. A big one and a little one, struggling. The hiss of their breath once came hot against his neck. Then a cry of pain, and an exultant laugh. It was Frick's laugh.

"You—you're going to kill me!"

There was surprise, unbelief and fear in that cry. Andy's heart sank as he heard it. Jackson was yellow! His last chance gone!

"Kill you? Sure, you doublecrossing rat! Sit still!" Frick was breathing hard, and the hoarse sound of murder was in his voice. "Pull a gun on me, would you?"

He reached over and slapped Jackson on the face. It echoed like the report of a pistol. Frick laughed again. Here was a man who enjoyed his killing.

"For God's sake!" Jackson's breath was coming in gasps, his voice no more than a hoarse murmur. "What have I done? You said you were taking me to meet Clancy! What have I done?" It was a scream—a cry for mercy.

"I told you we was takin' you to meet the boss." Frick laughed again. He was having a good time. "A bigger boss than Clancy, louse. An' he's going to send you straight to hell!" He laughed loudly. The grim joke tickled his fancy. He peered out the window, squinting. "Three more blocks, you!" he said to Andy. "Then pull over to the side of the road."

Jackson was sniveling now. He got down on his knees in the car. His cries completely unnerved Andy, whose hands shook so that he could hardly guide the car to a stop. There was no house in sight. Strangely enough, he felt little pity now for the man in the back seat. His thoughts were again of himself and Dolly. What a hell of a break to have a yellow guy like this to depend on! Still, something might happen. Frick mustn't know how he was feeling, anyhow. He turned in the seat when he had stopped the car.

"Get up off that floor!" he growled. He reached over and gave Jackson's head a shove. "For cripes' sake! You yellow pup!"

Frick looked up with a grin of surprise.

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"Shut your head!" Andy snarled. "Let's get this worm out of the car and be done with it. We ain't got all night."

"Shut off the lights," was all Frick answered.

Together they dragged Jackson out of the sedan. They had to lift him to the ground. He seemed too weak with fright to stand.

"Now," said Andy, "give me back my rod."

Frick looked at him hard for a moment, then handed him an automatic. But thereafter he kept to the rear, his own gun in his hand, covering them both.

IT WAS a weird scene which was enacted that night in the fields off the lonely lane which has come to be known in Chicago as "Dead Man's Road." No less than a score of gangsters, taken for rides by rivals jealous of their success or by chiefs fearful of their growing power, have been found there, dead.

It is a lonely spot. Clumps of trees line the roadway which motorists have come to avoid. Houses are few and far between. Once in awhile an officer of the county police chugs by on his motorcycle. Now and again a bootlegging truck rumbles past, guided by hard visaged men with rifles on the seat beside them. But mostly it is deserted. It was deserted on this night.

The three figures left the car, Andy and Jackson, whom he half supported, in the lead, closely followed by Frick who held both of them covered. The moonlight threw eerie pictures of them on the whiteness of the ground, and the ice baked earth broke beneath their feet in a crunching sound as they walked.

Jackson was quiet now, but he leaned heavily on Andy Jordan, his legs still too weak with fright to support his weight. They made their way past a clump of trees to a spot where they were hidden from the road.

"Here!" Frick growled.

They stopped. Jackson, his eyes wide with terror, turned in piteous appeal to Andy, who stepped away. He tore at the throat of his shirt. Andy felt sorry for him. Hell, this was no way to die. He felt sorry for himself, too.

"Now, Al—" Frick was grinning—"you get the works."

He stood slightly behind Andy, three feet away, his gun menacing them both. Jackson opened his mouth but no words came. Andy looked at him and turned his head away.

"God!" he said. "This is a job for you, Frick. You give it to him."

"Shut up!" Frick snarled. "Put that rod on him." His gun was leveled at Andy who did as he was told. "Now when I give the word, you blow him, get me? But I got some questions to ask first."

Out of a corner of his eye, Andy was watching for a break. Even the slimmest of chances! But Frick's eye was upon Andy, not Jackson. Jackson, poor devil, was too scared to be feared.

"Al," Frick went on, "you give over a load of booze last month to the Cammo mob, didn't you? Answer quick, now!"

"But," Jackson chattered, "I thought they was Jerry's men. How was I to know?" he cried wildly.

"That's all right," Frick went on, sneering. "We know all about that. And last week, when Jack Larson an' you was hijacked with a load, Larson gets knocked off, an' you—you don't even get a scratch. But you lose the alky. Ain't that right?"

"I couldn't help that! How could I help it?"

"Shut up! We know how you could 'a' helped it! An' two days later when we had another load spotted to grab off for ourselves to get back at that mob, they gets tipped off. You don't know nothin' about that either, I suppose!"

"I swear to God I don't!" Jackson screamed.

"That's right. Go on and swear. You got just three minutes, Al." Jackson was screaming his innocence. Frick pulled out his watch. "Any little message you want us to take back to the kiddies, Al?"

Jackson stood there, mute, trembling, at that. Andy was trembling himself. He stole a look at Frick, but Frick's eye was still fixed upon him. His lips were moving in time to the ticking of his watch. He was counting off the seconds.

"One minute, Al."

Jackson's hand went again to his throat. He tore at his coat. It flapped open. He held his stomach as if in pain.

"Thirty sec—"

Frick never finished that sentence. It happened so fast that even Andy, watching closely, hardly saw it. One second Jackson was standing there holding his stomach; the next, his hand had moved like a lightning flash beneath his coat to the belt at the small of his back. There was a spurt of flame. A shot. And there was Jackson, a small derringer pistol in his hand. And Frick, a look of complete surprise in his eyes, falling to the snow covered ground. It looked, in the moonlight, as though he had three eyes.

At the shot Andy acted from instinct rather than thought. Even as the flame spurted from the gun he leaped, grasping the wrist that held the pistol, to save himself from being shot along with Frick. He pushed Jackson's arm upward, but much to his surprise he found the other man was as strong as himself and it took all his effort even to do this. Nor were Jackson's eyes any longer filled with fright; they were hard and bright, and in the moonlight Andy caught a glimpse of thin lips set in a grim smile.

"Wait, you damn' fool!" Andy gasped.

But Jackson only struggled the harder, his eyes gleaming fierce and dark. Andy saw his chance of escape growing dim. Clancy would take no chances. There would be another car down the road somewhere. He knew Clancy's methods too well. Why wouldn't the fool understand!

"You damn' yap!" he panted. "Let up!"

Jackson's only reply was a grunt. The hand holding the pistol was slowly lowering. With a groan of despair Andy exerted what remained of his waning strength. He relaxed suddenly, then jerked, at the same time bringing his knee against Jackson's stomach. Jackson wilted, sank to his knees, and Andy twisted the pistol from his hand.

"Guess you got me after all." Jackson was breathing in gasps, but he showed no fear. "Go on. Bump me and get it over."

Andy reached down and grabbed him by the arm.

"C'mon!" He dragged the other man to his feet. "Get up, you damn' fool! We gotta get the hell out o' here."

Stumbling across the ruts of the plowed fields, they made their way, panting, to the car. Jackson looked over his shoulder, once, at the form of Frick, lying still on the field. Andy opened the car door and tumbled him into the front seat, then jumped behind the wheel. The starter whined. He threw the car in gear and they leaped away, speeding down the road to the west, without lights.

"Try anything phony now an' you'll be sorry," Andy said threateningly. Jackson remained silent, still breathing hard. "Get this, buddie," Andy went on. "You gotta get this! I wasn't tryin' to get you, back there. They was takin' me, too. I was just goin' to take a chance at Frick when you plugged him. If I was goin' to drill you I'd have done it back there just now, wouldn't I? But I hauled you out, didn't I?"

"Thanks," Jackson murmured. "I won't forget."

"O.K. Never mind that. I just wanted to know where we're at."

Andy stole a quick look at him. Fear of death past, Jackson seemed himself again. The hum of a motor sounded behind them. The gleam of headlights flashed on their windshield.

"There's the other car," Andy muttered, "and it's coming to beat hell."

He turned on the headlights. No use now for concealment. He pressed his foot down and the car leaped ahead, careened madly across a bump in the road and sped on. The other car was gaining. Andy took a hand from the wheel, dug into his pocket and shoved his automatic into Jackson's hand.

"Get in back!" he yelled. "Open that side window and if they get close, don't lose no time! Shoot at the windshield!" Jackson took the gun and climbed over into the rear. "And, damn' you," Andy yelled, "you turn yellow on me again and I'll plug you myself!" Jackson made no answer.

Andy's foot was clear down now. They were doing eighty and he cursed the car for not being faster. A gun barked from the rear, and there was a *ting!* of metal as the bullet tipped their fender. They were passing houses again now. If another car came out of a side road it would just be too bad. Andy held grimly to the wheel. If he could only make Crawford Avenue, with just a little traffic and some side streets to turn down instead of mud holes frozen over . . . Another shot, and another. The other car was less than fifty yards behind, now. Andy heard Jackson cursing softly.

"What the hell's the matter?" Andy yelled. "Give it to 'em, you damn' fool!"

"Shut up!" Jackson yelled back. "I know what I'm doing!"

"The hell you do!"

Another rut in the road jounced them off the asphalt, almost tipping them over, and Andy had to slow down as he skidded back to the pavement. The other car was a bare hundred feet behind. The bark of guns mingled with the sound of shattering glass and the rear window fell in. A swift rattle of shots. Bullets rained into the car. One of them clipped Andy's ear, shattering the windshield. They had a machine gun! He heard Jackson's gun at last. One shot.

"Got him!" Jackson grunted.

In the mirror Andy saw the lights of the pursuing car swerve, heard the screech of brakes. He felt rather than saw the crash as the machine in the rear left the road and turned on its side.

"They tried to climb a telegraph pole!" Jackson was looking back. He laughed soundlessly. "You can slow up now, kid."

He leaned back against the cushions and was silent. Andy slackened his speed. Poor devil, he thought. It had been a tough time for a guy with a streak of yellow.

"That's right, Al," he said. "Take it easy for a while."

He turned into Crawford Avenue and headed north. Now for Clancy.

DESPITE the run of traffic which even at this hour was fairly heavy with home coming weekend cars, Andy pressed the car along northward at a steady forty-mile gait, weaving in and out the line of cars. Persons in other machines turned to look as they passed.

"It's the busted windshield," Andy muttered.

He pressed his foot down harder and when they had come to a more populous section of town, where side streets branched off at every block, he selected one of the darkest of these and turned, pulling up halfway down the block.

"Got any dough?" he asked Jackson. "I only got a buck."

"Sure," said Jackson. "Plenty."

"All right," Andy said curtly. "That's swell. We'll ditch this bus and grab a cab. Let's go." They climbed out of the car, walked to the corner and caught a taxi.

"What's the idea?" Jackson wanted to know. He seemed bored with the whole proceeding.

Andy looked at him. He couldn't figure this fellow. One minute he was crying for his life; the next he didn't care what happened. Carefully he closed the sliding glass panel of the driver and leaned over, talking low.

"I'm goin' to come clean with you, Al," he said. "I need you, see? Or I think I will. But it means riskin' your neck and I ain't askin' nobody to do that for me that don't want to." Rapidly he told Jackson the story of how he had been forced on to this job.

"Clancy wanted to get rid of us both," he finished, adding grimly, "He wants my girl. We're goin' now to pick her up, see? Then I'm settlin' with Clancy. If you want to be declared in, it's jake with me. But if you don't feel like another scrap tonight I'll drop you off somewhere. It's up to you."

"Sure," said Jackson. "It's jake with me, too. Got a cigaret? I'm all out."

They rode the rest of the way in silence. Once Jackson coughed and pulled his coat more tightly about him.

"Cold night," Andy said.

"Yeah. Gimme another cigaret."

Al might be yellow, Andy thought, but after all he was a good egg. Anyhow he liked him. When they neared the corner of 22nd and Halsted, Andy stopped the cab, instructing the driver to wait. The streets were almost deserted. A policeman on the corner looked at them with interest, but did nothing to stop them. Andy led the way down Halsted for half a block or so, stopping before a three story frame building that housed a delicatessen on the ground floor. The top two floors were apartments.

"This is the place," Andy said.

He opened a door at the side. A single light glowed dimly near the top of a narrow stairway.

"If anything happens," he whispered, "get rough."

Jackson grunted agreement and they padded softly up the stairs. Andy placed his ear to the door to the apartment on the second floor, but heard nothing. He pulled out a key ring, selected a skeleton and inserted it noiselessly. The lock turned.

"Keep close behind me," he whispered.

The next moment he had swung the door open and they were inside.

The place was pitch black except for a crack of light to the rear along the floor. Andy guessed that it came from beneath the door of the room where he had last seen Dolly. He made for it, stepping cautiously, stopping at each creak of the loose boards. He could hear Jackson breathing just behind him. He turned the knob gently and pushed open the door. The room was empty.

"She's gone!" Andy cried. He turned to Jackson. "She's gone," he repeated.

"What now?" Jackson said.

Andy seemed not to hear him. With long silent strides he was off down the hall, out the door and down the stairs, Jackson following at his heels. Swiftly Andy kept on, rounded the corner and climbed again into the waiting cab. He did not seem to realize that Jackson was still with him until he heard him speak.

"Better tell the driver where to go."

Andy gave the number of Clancy's apartment.

"Clancy's got her," he said to Jackson. "Do you stick or not?"

"I think that's a swell idea," Jackson said with a grin.

Andy sat on the edge of the seat for the entire distance, urging the driver to greater speed. When he wasn't telling the chauffeur to hurry, he mumbled to himself. When they had crossed the river, Jackson spoke.

"What are you going to do?"

"Kill him!" Andy said fiercely.

"That's a damn' fool way to talk," Jackson said quietly. "What do you think you're going to do—ring the bell and have him let you in?"

"I'll break down the door!"

"Don't be a damn' fool! I'm with you

on this, see? But there ain't any use to commit suicide. We'll break in through the back and do it quiet."

"I don't care how we get in," Andy growled.

When they got to Clancy's block, it was Jackson who tapped on the glass partition and stopped the cab. He paid the driver and got out.

"Now," he said, "let's take a look."

They walked toward Clancy's on the opposite side of the street, keeping upon the frozen grass parkway to avoid making a noise. Jackson counted the number of buildings between Clancy's and the corner.

"There's a light in the window," Andy said excitedly. "Let's go."

"Seventh house," Jackson muttered. "Come on."

Stealthily, keeping in the shadows, they made their way to the rear, turned into the alley and crept along the fences which walled it in.

"This is it," Andy said, stopping.

Jackson looked back and counted again to make sure. Reaching over the wooden fence, they unlocked the gate at the rear of the building and went in, mounting the back stairway cautiously. They stopped on the first landing and Andy placed his ear against the back door of Clancy's apartment.

"He's there."

He straightened, clenching his fists.

"Not so loud."

Jackson's hand was on his arm. There was a small window, five feet above the porch, through which a light showed.

"Think you can open that?" He bent over and motioned for Andy to stand on his back.

Cautiously Andy raised himself to the window level. It opened into the kitchen. He tried the window. It was unlocked. An inch at a time, he pushed it open. Then, slowly, carefully, he eased himself into the room. As his feet hit the floor he heard Clancy laugh. The door into the front part of the place was standing ajar.

"Ain't she the little spitfire, though?" Clancy was saying.

The blood pushed to Andy's brain in a rush of anger. He forgot that he was alone; forgot Jackson standing outside the locked door which he, Andy, was expected to open. Grasping in one hand Jackson's derringer pistol that had already killed one man that night, he made his way softly toward the sound of Clancy's voice.

Going swiftly down the hallway from the kitchen Andy thus came upon Clancy and Chris, the Italian, fighting for possession of Dolly. Unhesitating, with the roar of an angry bull, he leaped upon them both. He brought down the muzzle of the small gun with all his force upon the skull of the Italian. Chris slumped to the floor, and Andy attempted to turn the pistol on Clancy and pull the trigger. Clancy, however, was quick. His hand shot out, knocking Andy's arm aside. The pistol clattered to the floor, exploding harmlessly as it fell.

"You again, is it?"

Clancy snarled in hate, and swung his fist. Andy ducked the swing. He stepped in and aimed a kick at Clancy's middle. It caught him on the kneecap with sufficient force to make him stumble, but with a bellow of fury Clancy was up again, pressing in, disregarding Andy's futile blows. His hand shot out. It closed upon Andy's collar and held him there, at arm's length. Clancy's lips parted in a sneer.

"So you got away, did you? Come back to settle with me, did you?"

A swing of his leg sent Andy's feet from under him and, his hand at his throat, Clancy forced him to the floor. Holding him thus, Clancy knelt beside him and reached for an empty bottle.

"Get me, will you?" he grated. "You got away once tonight, but you don't get away from me—you nor your girl neither."

Clancy raised the bottle, but it never descended. Dolly screamed. A gun barked, and Clancy fell across his intended victim.

Andy opened his eyes. His head was in Dolly's lap. She was crying, stroking his face. He struggled to a sitting posture. His head was still swimming, and his neck was so sore he could hardly swallow.

"Jees!" he said, coughing. "Hello, baby."

He smiled at her, trying to remember what happened. A fight—some one choking him—Clancy! He sat up straight at that and looked around. Clancy was lying nearby. Jackson, gun in hand, was sitting in a chair against the wall. He smiled wanly.

"Climbed in after you, through the window," he explained.

Then he slumped forward and fell to the floor. Andy staggered to his feet and went to him. Raising him in his arms, he slipped a hand beneath his coat to feel his heart, then snatched it out quickly in surprise. It was covered with blood. Jackson opened his eyes.

"They got me," he whispered, "out—back there on the road."

"God!" Andy exclaimed. "Are you hurt much, Al?"

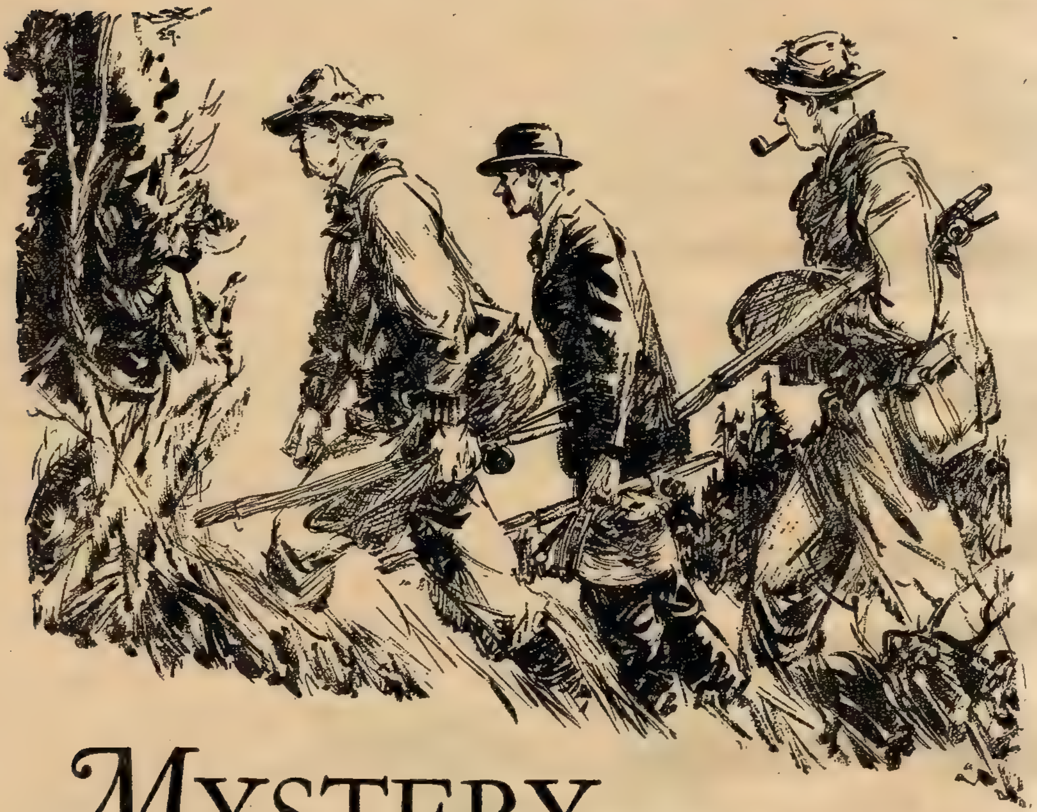
Jackson replied, but with an effort.

"Thanks, old man, for saving me—tonight. You—you saved me from a lot of things. Lord! I was afraid I was going to die a coward."

His lips formed into a smile. Then, with a whispering sigh, he closed his eyes and went limp in Andy's arms. Andy got up slowly, took Dolly's coat and tossed it over her shoulders.

"C'mon," he said. "We gotta get out of here." At the door, he looked back at Jackson. "Lord!" he said again. "And there's the guy I called yellow!"

These are the four suspected



MYSTERY MOUNTAIN

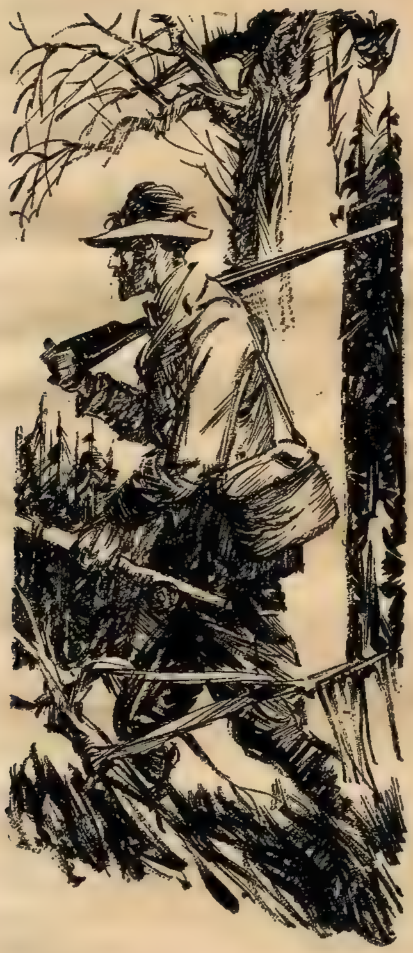
By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

EXCEPT for the cook, Buck Weaver, Pat Shane and I were alone in camp. The sun was sinking glamourously, a ball of fire behind the purple spired cones of Mystery Mountain. Fall River roared by, making mystic music, a drumming bass to the tenor of the fir screened winds.

"It begins to look like those fellows are lost," Shane said worriedly, seating himself wearily on a rock and loosening the laces of his boots.

We had tramped the woody slopes all day, searching for Whelan, Wanless, Breeling and Strawn. Shane had explored one tributary cañon to its head, and I an-

of the murder!



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other. Frank O'Doul had taken another and, incidentally, had not yet returned. All of us had hallooed and fired pistols, but had received no response from any of those four of our party who had left camp early yesterday morning to find Lost Creek.

"Lost Creek!" mused Shane, nursing a stone bruised foot. "I wonder if there is such a place."

And I, too, wondered whether Lost Creek were only a myth. I was possibly the poorest woodsman of them all, yet by rights I should have known this particular wilderness flanking the valley of upper Rio Grande better than any other living man. For I, Paul Valentine, was the owner of it in fee simple—merely by virtue of the chance that I happened to be the descendant of a certain Castilian captain, Pablo Valentino, who more than two centuries ago had been granted a gigantic gift of wilderness acres by a king of Spain. Those, of course, had been the days when all of this Southwest, even to the upper reaches of the Rio Grande, belonged to Mexico.

Yet, though master of all I surveyed, I was a stranger in a strange land. My people had been quite Americanized for many generations and I had seldom been west of St. Louis. This, in fact, was the first time I had ever penetrated into the heart of my ancestral estate.

"Maybe Frank O'Doul found track of those fellows," Shane suggested, now dumping gravel from his boot. "Or maybe he's lost, too. A darn' wonder we weren't lost ourselves, Paul."

"We probably would have been if we hadn't kept within sight of the rimrocks of Fall River Cañon," I admitted. "But O'Doul—I think he'll turn up all right. More than likely he'll bring in word of the four wanderers."

But he did not. Frank O'Doul came plodding into camp just after moonrise that night, reporting that he had found no trace of the four missing men.

O'Doul was a lean six footer, sharp featured, hawk eyed, with cheeks so thin that he seemed to be sucking them in. He was an attorney of Culebra City, the county seat, and had for some years served me in such matters as attending to the taxes on the mountain grant. Recently he had been elected to the office of district attorney.

"So you found no trace of any of that bunch?" inquired Shane as O'Doul was wolfing a cold supper by moonlight.

"No trace," affirmed O'Doul. He was a man of few words.

"Well, did you find that stream which is supposed to disappear in the gravel—the one they call Lost Creek?" persisted Shane.

"No. I doubt if such a creek exists. Fools, those fellows, to go tramping off hunting it!" Frank O'Doul snapped the last opinion irritably.

Weaver, the grizzled sourdough who was our camp cook, came and refilled O'Doul's coffee cup.

"Did you even find any good fishing?" again persisted Shane.

O'Doul, on coming in, had leaned his fly rod against a tree and had hung his creel on a limb. All three of us that day on our expedition of search for the four who had left at daylight yesterday morning, had gone prepared to try out any likely trout water we might stumble across.

"Yes," answered O'Doul. "Coming back I had a good hour just before sundown on the south fork of Fall River. Half a creel full, maybe."

He drained the last of his coffee and then added, again irritably:

"With all the trout a man wants in Fall River, why the devil did those fellows hike off for a rumored creek which probably doesn't exist? It's past understanding."

But it was not past understanding. And I had an idea that O'Doul, himself an inveterate fisherman, must have known it in his heart. What fisherman can resist the lure of virgin water? The stream whose banks are untrod by earlier anglers? The brook whose every next hole is an unexplored mystery, on whose next riffle no human has ever cast a fly?

The missing men—Todd Whelan, Carl Wanless, Luther Strawn and Breeling—were all of a temperament to be lured by the rumor we had heard of a lost stream high up on Mystery Mountain, a stream which disappeared—so went the rumor—in the porous gravel of a mountain meadow, a creek teeming with hitherto unchallenged native trout; in all, a fisherman's paradise.

Native must these trout of Lost Creek be, if they existed at all, because the stream was tributary to no other. Certainly it had not been stocked. Its fish couldn't get out, nor could others come in. Not a flooding creek, probably, because it was above the cloudburst altitude. Thus, if it existed and contained any trout at all, these must be "native", the species sometimes known as "black spotted", sometimes known as "cutthroat", the breed natural to Rocky Mountain waters before human agency transported "red spotted Eastern brook chars" from the Alleghanies, or "rainbows" from California.

It was largely because of this Lost Creek rumor that Whelan, Wanless, Breeling and Strawn had come along. They had been determined from the first to find Lost Creek. As for Shane and me, we had come West on vacation. The two of us had been college classmates. Shane, educated for the bar, had oddly enough drifted into a practise as a private detective. In this practise, back East, he had achieved renown. He was a student of mysteries. The very name of this wilderness estate of mine, Mystery Mountain, had been sufficient to whet Shane's desire for an expedition of exploration.

We had called at Culebra City and asked O'Doul's advice about getting up a party. O'Doul, eager for good fishing, had himself enlisted as a member. Shane had suggested that the more the merrier, with the result that the completed organization of our camp had included seven men and a cook. We had come by auto to the foot of Fall River Falls, thence trekking on foot, with packs, to this present camp upcañon.

And now four of our party, Whelan, Wanless, Breeling and Strawn, had been lost for forty hours on Mystery Mountain.

THE FORTY hours became forty-eight when, by daylight, none had returned.

And then, during breakfast of that morning of September fifth, came Todd Whelan.

He was haggard, half starved, dragging

his feet. He was bruised, his clothing torn; he limped painfully into camp and fell prone by the fire. For a moment it seemed that he had fainted.

He revived with a cup of steaming coffee, however, and looked stupidly up at Pat Shane, who was bombarding him with questions. Shane being a professional investigator, the habit of questioning, of drawing men out, was strong in him.

"Where are the others? Did you find Lost Creek?"

Whelan, though now pallid and fatigued to the verge of collapse, was ordinarily a man of bold and forceful presence. He was stocky and broad, about five feet seven in height, with a bulbous nose, a square jaw and bushy eyebrows. We knew him as a retired cattleman of means.

He was a great fisherman. Even through his late dilemma he had retained his rod and creel of fish. Later he explained that he would have cast off their weight but for the fact that they might save his life, furnishing food if he were lost for weeks.

Lost he had been. He didn't know in how many distressing circles he had wandered, confused by the interlocking saddles at the heads of hollows, shut from the sun and stars by tall timber, often balked and diverted from a chosen direction by insurmountable cliffs.

"But," he added after a second cup of coffee, "I found Lost Creek. That's where I got those natives." He motioned toward his wicker creel.

Shane, O'Doul and I looked in the creel. Sure enough it contained a dozen or more black spotted trout. There was an orange arc at the gills, from which the species obtained the nickname—cutthroat. There were no red spots on their sides, proving that they were not chars, not the Eastern brook, which was the breed predominating in Fall River and its connecting tributaries.

"And that's not all," resumed Todd Whelan, looking queerly around at O'Doul from under his bushy eyebrows. "I not only found Lost Creek, but I found the *lost cabin* on Lost Creek."

"A cabin up there?" echoed O'Doul skeptically.

"A cabin and a man living in it," insisted Whelan.

My own interest was pricked. Naturally I wanted to know about a cabin built on property belonging to myself.

"Did you see the tenant?" I asked.

"No. But the cabin was not old and was in good repair. It was on the bank of Lost Creek, almost down where the creek disappears in the gravel. I had struck the water just above and fished down, not for sport but to insure my food. That was yesterday. The evening before I had become separated from Wanless, Breeling and Strawn. We knew we were lost, had each agreed to go to a high point to spy for landmarks, agreeing to meet and report our findings. Darkness came and we were unable to rejoin each other. At least I failed to find the other three.

"I wandered most of the night. At dawn yesterday I went on in what I thought was the right direction and struck a small creek. It was heavily fringed with growths of aspen and was teeming with native trout. I took a few and then saw this cabin. A tiny cabin, rudely built, with a sod roof. I knew it was occupied, for there was an ax outside whose blade was quite bright; not rusted, so it had been chopped with since the last rain."

"A pretty clue—that," commented Pat Shane, his detective instincts keenly alert.

"I knocked, with no response," resumed Todd Whelan. "I tried the door. It was barred from the inside. The only window used oiled paper as a substitute for glass, so I could not peer in. My only motive of intrusion was, of course, to request food and directions to Fall River Cañon. Then—I—I—"

Whelan hesitated, looking queerly from one to another of us. When he resumed it was in a lowered voice, which contained some note akin to awe, I thought, and which gave me the impression that he was beginning a recital of which he doubted our belief.

"I didn't linger long," he said. "Because, darn it, men, I had an uneasy feeling about those premises. Somehow I had a hunch I was being watched. Then I heard a bell. Yes, a bell, tinkling in a grove hardly a hundred yards from the creek. It gave me the jumps. Dang it all, men, it gave me the jumps."

"A bell!" exclaimed District Attorney Frank O'Doul.

"A bell!" echoed Shane. "What kind of a bell? Go on, Whelan. You interest me strangely."

"I got over the jumps," resumed Whelan, still in a subdued, hesitant voice—a manner, I later thought, which completely belied his character as a hard bitten ex-cattleman—"when it occurred to me that the bell would be about the neck of some domestic animal, possibly a sheep or a goat. That might mean a herder somewhere about, from whom I could get directions. So I made my way, perhaps a trifle fearsomely, toward the sound of the bell.

"It led me into a grove of aspens. I came to the bell. It was a brass bell, I think, too light for a cow bell, and of beehive shape. There was no cow, bell mare, goat or sheep about. Believe it or not, men, but the bell was hanging to the limb of an aspen tree. It was tied to the limb with what seemed to be buckskin. The tree quaked, shivered with each breeze—That's how the quaking-asp gets its name. Even when it seems to be a dead calm the leaves are never still. And each time this aspen limb quivered in the breeze, the bell tinkled."

Whelan's delivery was increasingly hesitant; he was looking now at the ground rather than at this auditors. I had a feeling that the strangest part of his story was yet to come.

Shane was eagerly attentive, as was his wont upon the broaching of a mystery. Frank O'Doul was grave, stroking his lean chin, regarding Whelan from beneath half closed lids. They were a contrast: Shane freshly youthful, eagerly and encouragingly credulous; O'Doul, patently and almost cynically skeptical.

"Do you think the bell had been hanging there a long time?" asked Shane.

"I know it," affirmed Whelan with a wag of his head. "Why? Because the limb had grown around the cord which secured the bell. The cord was completely buried, all around, beneath the bark. To be exact, I think the bell had been hanging there since August 13, 1909. This is September, 1924, which would make it fifteen years."

We all gaped as Whelan uttered these definite figures.

"Come now," derided O'Doul. "Are you sure this isn't a brainstorm, that you didn't go a little batty wandering around in the woods?"

"Just a minute," inserted Shane. "I can't pay you on the fifteen-year theory, because I believe the hinge of the bell clapper would become stiff, rusted, in fifteen years, if it hung out in all weather. I may be wrong, but that's my opinion. I never hung a bell on a tree for fifteen years. I'd guess, though, that the clapper joint would need to be lubricated every season or so, if the quaking of an aspen would continue to cause the bell to ring."

I noticed that it was now Whelan who was gaping.

"How did you know?" he asked Shane.

"I don't know. I'm just guessing," admitted Shane deferentially. He was by habit deferential when speaking to men twenty years his senior, such as both Whelan and O'Doul. In fact, our entire party were men in their early fifties, except Shane and myself.

"Well, you guessed right," answered Whelan. "That bell had been oiled, and recently. Why do I know? Because right there, level with my eyes and in the first crotch of that aspen, stood a small can of gun oil. The outside of that can was as bright as the ax blade I had seen at the cabin."

There was a snort. It came from District Attorney Frank O'Doul. It was his only comment, but so eloquent with disbelief that it offended Whelan.

"See here, O'Doul," Whelan shot out with a hint of his normal gruffness, "if you don't believe the bell and the oil can, there's no chance in the world of your believing what comes next."

O'Doul's only reply was a shrug.

"Sure we believe you," encouraged Shane. "Shoot the works, Whelan."

"It's got to get off my chest," acknowledged Whelan, though a trifle sulkily. "So here goes. As I stood there under the aspen looking up at the bell, which still tinkled with every breeze, I became aware that I was standing on a slight mound of earth. I looked down at my feet, and there not only was a slight mound of earth, but a headstone. I was standing on a grave. It was an old grave, grass grown. Its monument was of white sandstone, set upright like a section corner. It was a soft stone, and on it an epitaph had been scratched with a knife or other sharp implement. It was dim, of course, and I had to get down on my hands and knees to read it. The usual epitaph—a name, a date of birth, a date of death—with a single exception. The exception was a sinister substitute for the usual term, 'died.' There, as I knelt on the grave of that dead man, the bell tinkling overhead, I took a card from my pocket and copied the epitaph. Here it is."

Whelan passed a card to Shane. O'Doul and I edged up to read over Shane's shoulder. What we read was:

Here Lies Jonathan Bart
Born, Jan 29th, 1874
Murdered, August 13th, 1909

While we were gasping and gaping, Whelan continued:

"This is 1924. That is why I think the bell has been hanging there fifteen years."

"But why? And who the devil scratched the epitaph?" wondered Shane. "Certainly the murdered man didn't write the epitaph on his own headstone. And certainly the murderer, after burying his victim, didn't advertise his crime by hanging a bell over the grave."

"Take it or leave it," insisted Whalen stubbornly. "For my part I left it, and in a hurry. As I knelt there copying that epitaph, I again had the feeling of eyes in the forest—that I was being covertly watched. So I left. In fact, I ran, not returning to the cabin, but heading straight down the timbered slope. That was yesterday, somewhere near the middle of the day. My watch had stopped, and I'm not sure of the time. I kept going, letting down-slopes lead me where they would. During last night I came to a big stream, which I knew must be a fork of Fall River. I followed its course and here I am. But, hello! Another lost soul saved! There comes Carl Wanless."

WANLESS, second of the four lost men, staggered into camp. He was exhausted, as had been Whelan. But he was a wiry man, athletic and as hard as nails, who recuperated swiftly under the stimulants of food and coffee.

Wanless was about Whelan's age and height, although much thinner. Wanless was slight, hatchet faced, with thin whitish eyebrows; in these respects a distinctly opposite type from Whelan. A likable chap, I had thought Wanless. An even tempered comrade in camp, wearing well on acquaintance. He was of German descent and affected a finely trimmed Van Dyke beard. Naturally his cheeks were now unshaven and grimed with sweat, but ordinarily he was neater than the run of men. He was the owner, so I understood, of a string of lumber yards up and down the Rio Grande, and resided at Del Norte.

Wanless, too, it developed, had sometime yesterday stumbled upon the lost cabin on Lost Creek.

"Here's where we check up on Whelan," O'Doul cut in harshly upon Wanless' story. "Did you hear a bell ringing? Did you find the grave of a dead man?"

"Bell? Grave?" echoed Wanless. "Why, no. What do you mean?"

"Just a minute," inserted Shane. "Was there a breeze blowing about the time you passed the cabin?"

Wanless, finished with refreshment, had begun shaving before a mirror tacked to a pine tree. His face, except for the

Van Dyke beard on his chin, was all white with lather as he turned curiously upon Shane.

"Breeze?" he questioned. "I can't see what difference that would make. No, there was not any breeze. It was a dead calm. Somewhere around noon, I should say, although I didn't bother to look at the time. What about the bell and the grave?"

"If it was a calm," said Shane, "naturally you didn't hear the bell, which in turn would have kept you from finding the grave. Therefore Whelan's story still stands up. You came to this lost cabin on Lost Creek, did you, Wanless? Anybody around?"

"The cabin door was barred. There was no one around. I left my .32 rifle there, though. Left it on the woodpile where the tenant would be sure to find it."

I recalled now that Wanless had left on this hike with a .32 rifle, in addition to his fishing outfit. He had mentioned that he might run on to some worthwhile game. He alone of the four explorers had been so equipped.

"Why did you abandon your rifle?" I asked.

"I had to throw off ballast," explained Wanless. "I was lost and getting weak in the legs. A dozen times before finding the cabin I had been on the point of discarding my rifle. It was a choice between that and throwing away my creel of trout. But the trout were edible and the rifle wasn't. Leaving the rifle at the cabin was more sensible than discarding it in the woods, because now I've got a Chinaman's chance of getting it back again. My name's engraved on it. If the tenant of the cabin is honest, some day I'll recover the rifle."

"You saw a fresh cut woodpile and a bright ax," suggested Shane, "and therefore you knew the cabin was tenanted."

"I did," informed Wanless. "Also I saw a Maltese cat, purring on the cabin stoop."

"Good!" crowed Shane delightedly. "The tame cat is the best tenancy clue yet. The cat may have been up a tree or under the house when Whelan passed. And we don't know whether he passed an hour or so before or after you, Wanless. He didn't notice your rifle on the woodpile, but it could easily have been there. What I can't understand is this: exhausted and lost as you were, why didn't you stand pat at the cabin and wait for the tenant to show up?"

Wanless turned again from his shaving. He had scraped away most of the lather and I could see his cheeks crease in a sheepish smile.

"To tell you the truth," he admitted, "the real reason why I left was because I began to have a creepy feeling about that cabin. Somehow I got a crazy idea that I was being watched from the bushes."

Todd Whelan looked triumphantly at O'Doul. Wanless had confirmed his story in every detail except the trip to the ringing bell, an omission easily accounted for by the lack of breeze.

"Did you creel any fish on the hike?" Shane asked Wanless.

"Yes, to keep a food supply. Took a few natives from Lost Creek right near the cabin, and already had a few Eastern brook which I'd taken from a fork of Fall River on the way up."

Shane was pursuing his inquiry into the details of Wanless' hike when O'Doul somberly interrupted to remind us that we were still short two men. The morning was well advanced now. More than fifty hours had passed since Breeling and Strawn had left camp. Thirty-six hours had passed since they had last been seen by Whelan and Wanless.

"I'm not worried about Luther Strawn," commented Whelan. "He's easily the best woodsman of us all. Give him matches and he could live alone in the mountains for a month. Ten to one he's run on to some A-1 fishing and is simply sticking with it. But about Breeling I'm not so sure. Breeling's a blunderer; and bull headed, too. Worse, he's the only one of the four of us who started out in hip waders. Waders are fine for fishing, but they're man killers on a hike. Yet, if Breeling ditches his, he's in his stocking feet."

I was inclined to agree with Whelan's estimate of the two missing men. Strawn was a man of unknown past—O'Doul had a vague idea that he was a retired osteopath—but we all admitted that he was an expert woodsman. He was of medium build, rubicund and with a split upper lip, an idler with no other hobbies than hunting and fishing. Considering his experience, I felt pretty sure that he would turn up safely.

But Breeling! I doubted if he ever knew enough to lay out wet matches in the sun to dry. Breeling was an undertaker by vocation, with a chain of mortuaries in half a dozen towns of the Rio Grande valley. He was not a prepossessing fellow, due to a bulging brow, deep set eyes and a pocked condition of his cheeks. Nor were his looks redeemed by an affable disposition. He was morose, taciturn, had been rather a blight upon the comradeship of our party. To cap it all, Breeling's personal equipment for this expedition had been a magnet for ridicule. For instance, he was wearing a black derby hat. Consider him—an undertaker lost in the woods, wearing a derby hat and staggering over stones in hip waders.

"Yes," Frank O'Doul was agreeing, "Strawn will show up, never fear, but ten to one Breeling's fallen over some rimrock and broken a leg. We ought never to have brought that fellow along. He—"

"Hall-oo—oo!"

From far up the timber on the cañon slope came a faint cry. We all tensed. There was some one up there in distress, calling. We listened for a repetition of the call. None came.

"It's Strawn, on a bet," shouted O'Doul. "He's likely hurt. Men, let's get him!"

He started up the slope toward the sound, Shane and I at his heels. Wanless was too fatigued to come, but Whelan was not far behind us.

The call was not repeated, and it took us nearly an hour to find the fallen man. We did so, at length, and he was not Strawn but Breeling. Breeling after all. The little undertaker lay prone under a pine, still wearing his red rubber hip boots and his derby hat. Near his hand lay a fly rod. Over his shoulder was a wicker creel and I knew by the weight that it contained a few trout.

We had him down to camp in a jiffy. When he opened his eyes Wanless jollied him by saying:

"Did you pick up any business at Lost Creek, Breeling? There's a dead man up there."

To my surprise Breeling, blinking his deep set eyes, replied faintly:

"Yes, but he's been dead fifteen years. He—"

His head drooped on folded arms. We couldn't get another word out of him for an hour.

"He was there, all right," Whelan mentioned during that interval. He had taken a peep into Breeling's creel. "He's got a few cutthroats. Couldn't have caught 'em anywhere but Lost Creek."

"The fish must bite awful good up there," remarked O'Doul dryly, "if a derby hatted undertaker can catch 'em."

AFTER the cook, Buck Weaver, had served the noon meal, we got Breeling's story. He, too, had stumbled on the lost cabin on Lost Creek. Sometime yesterday, he said. He wasn't sure whether it was late morning or early afternoon. He hadn't noticed a rifle on the woodpile; in fact, he hadn't even noticed the woodpile itself. There was no way of telling whether his call there had preceded or followed those of Whelan and Wanless.

But he'd heard the bell. That was the vital thing. Not only had he heard it tinkling in the aspen grove back of the cabin, but had investigated and found the grave. He checked Whelan to the most minute detail, except that he hadn't noticed the can of gun oil in the crotch of the tree.

Most significant of all was his statement, wheezed hoarsely as he looked nervously over his shoulder:

"And some one was there with me, close by. I couldn't see him, but I could feel his eyes. I'll even swear I heard a twig crack, just as I was reading the epitaph on the grave. A name, a birth date, a death date. A murder date, rather, for the inscription on the stone claims a murder. A murder fifteen years old! When the twig cracked I ran. I've been running ever since."

O'Doul's earlier incredulity had now been routed. He changed his entire front.

"A murder in my own judicial bailiwick!" he commented. "Fifteen years old and unreported. I'm half inclined to investigate, men."

"Hop to it," exhorted Pat Shane. "And if you need a consulting detective, hire me. A pretty case, I'd say, with every clue fifteen years old."

"There are no clues but the bell and the epitaph," I commented. "They wouldn't get us to first base."

"And to make it a perfect day," shouted Shane, pointing up the river bank, "here comes Luther Strawn."

Here indeed came the last of the missing men, Luther Strawn. By his walk he was tired, but he was by no means as near collapse as the other three had been. He waved to us as he approached and smiled wanly. He had been out longer than any of the rest, yet I could tell that he would have been good for another fifteen miles.

He came in and hung his creel on the pine limb which already supported half a dozen other creels—those of Wanless, Whalen, O'Doul, Breeling, Shane and myself.

"You found the lost cabin on Lost Creek, of course?" queried Shane eagerly, hoping for new clues.

Strawn had picked up the pot of black coffee and was drinking from it grounds and all, without ceremony. Shane repeated his query and then Strawn turned to him with arched brows.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"What?" cried Shane. "The crack woodsman of the bunch didn't find Lost Creek? Everybody else did." And Shane recounted to Strawn the high points of the stories brought in by Whelan, Breeling and Wanless.

Strawn, I noticed, interrogated him, got all the facts before making any extensive reply himself. Then he responded, with what seemed to me a studied deliberation:

"Well, as for me, I never found Lost Creek or any cabin. I heard no bell ringing. I saw no grave, or oil can, or bright ax, or Maltese cat. After becoming separated from the other three, I slept all night on the ground. The next day, yesterday, I made my way cautiously down the slopes. I picked the wrong saddle and went too far north, so had to sleep out a second night. But this morning I came down into the head of Fall River Cañon. Rested two hours, fished an hour there, caught ten trout and fried three on a stone, then walked down-cañon into camp."

That ended Strawn's recital. He, Wanless, Breeling and Whelan repaired to the pup tents to sleep.

O'Doul, Shane and I talked the matter over. O'Doul's final opinion was:

"After all, I see nothing to do but to drop it. The chances are that there's a locoed hermit living in that cabin, who's trying to create a mystery out of thin air. It's a good bet that no one is really buried under that aspen tree. Or, if so, he probably died a natural death. Certainly, even though I'm district attorney, I have no authority to dig up that fifteen year old skeleton, if it exists."

We took our rods and strolled along the river for the three-to-five fly jumpers; Shane and I together upstream, O'Doul alone downstream. When we returned Buck Weaver had supper on the fire. O'Doul was there. Every one else was up and around.

It was just following supper when I saw Shane beckoning me in the dusk. When I joined him he also beckoned O'Doul. He led us to the river bank and then asked softly—

"Why should Strawn lie about having found Lost Creek?"

We started. O'Doul abruptly asked—

"You think he *did* find Lost Creek?"

"I think he did," answered Shane soberly, "and for some unfathomable reason prefers to deny it."

O'Doul looked narrowly at Shane, saying slowly—

"I myself wondered why Strawn, the best woodsman of that bunch, should be the only one not to find Lost Creek, and should be the last in getting back to camp."

"Those are points," agreed Shane. "But the main point was developed when I peeped into Strawn's creel. It's hanging on the tree alongside all the other creels. There are seven trout in it, running from eight to eleven inches long. Not a red spot on them. Black spotted they are, with cutthroat gills. In other words, Strawn brought in seven native trout. He claims only to have fished in Fall River."

"And yet in a week," exclaimed O'Doul, "not a one of us has caught anything but Eastern brooks and rainbows in Fall River! A pretty point, Shane. Strawn fished Lost Creek and claims he didn't."

"But a motive?" I objected.

"Men were missing and were later found," commented Shane broodingly. "Motives are missing—they too may be later found."

"I'd like to take a look at those seven native trout," said O'Doul. He turned and beckoned to Buck Weaver, who was rustling fuel nearby. "Buck," directed O'Doul, "bring us the trout from Strawn's creel. If anybody asks you, you're bringing them to the river bank to clean them for breakfast."

A FEW minutes later Weaver brought us seven very nice trout. They were distinctly natives. We examined them, discussed at length the issue as to why Luther Strawn had seen fit to deny his presence on Lost Creek. There was another point. While trout will easily keep in a creel for two or three days in a high mountain altitude, and these of Strawn's were eminently fresh enough to eat, it was our joint opinion that they had not been caught that morning as claimed by Strawn. They were as dried as herring, almost, and their tails were beginning to curl.

"They were caught yesterday," affirmed O'Doul with conviction, "in some stream which is not tributary to Fall River."

"Well, I might as well make our bluff good about cleaning these fish for breakfast," remarked Pat Shane.

He took out his knife and began to dress the fish.

In doing so he made another discovery, which at the moment seemed to be a negative import. Having slit open the fourth of seven trout, Shane found a broken off Royal Coachman artificial fly hooked in the base of its throat. An artificial fly is equipped with a gut subleader six inches long. This is suspended to a loop of the main leader of the tackle. Remaining upon this broken Coachman fly found in Strawn's trout was an inch and a half of the sub-leader which had originally been six inches long.

"In jerking this fish out," commented Shane, "the sub-leader broke just above the fly, leaving the fly in the trout's throat; yet Strawn saved the fish, evidently; the jerk could conceivably have catapulted the fish to the bank. I'll just keep this for a souvenir of the mystery," Shane finished, laughing.

Whereupon he stuck the Coachman hook in the band of his felt hat, following a custom universally followed by trout fishermen.

We returned to the camp-fire, where Shane delivered the seven dressed trout to the cook.

Shortly we retired. I arose at dawn, when I found only Shane and Weaver stirring.

"I just fished up one more clue." Shane grinned at me.

That was the only statement he would make until after breakfast, when we retired apart with O'Doul. O'Doul was as curious as I was, and Shane lost no time in divulging his latest clue.

"Fellows," he said, "the seven native trout were found in Strawn's creel, all right, but they were caught by the derby hatted undertaker, Breeling."

We gaped.

"Breeling," went on Shane, "seems to have had some reason for wanting to make it appear that Strawn was lying about not having found Lost Creek. Anyway, the evidence is that Breeling, while the others were napping yesterday afternoon and while we three were off fishing, took seven native trout out of his own creel and traded them for seven red spotted trout in Strawn's creel. Can you beat that?"

We couldn't. We insisted on the why.

"The why," explained Shane, "is that I have just looked over the tackle. Strawn's line is equipped with a six-foot leader with the customary three fly loops. The flies are a Coachman, a Hackle and a Gnat. That means nothing, because Strawn, having lost one fly, might have looped on another. But he didn't. It was Breeling who lost the fly. His line shows a three-foot leader with the customary two fly loops. On the lower fly loop there is a Hackle; on the upper fly loop there is a broken piece of sub-leader just four and a half inches long. It exactly matches the one and a half inch piece we found in the throat of the native trout. Fly sub-leaders are six inches long."

"Rather thin, I should say," grunted Frank O'Doul. "Any one is likely to lose a fly off his leader."

"But two fly leaders are not likely to break at the same spot, under these peculiar circumstances," corrected Shane. "I stand on the theory that the seven native trout, although found in Strawn's creel, were caught by the tackle now on Breeling's line. There's still another angle. If the creeled trout were framed, maybe the tackle was also framed."

O'Doul threw up his hands.

"Rubbish! What are you trying to do, Shane? Make out that we got a crook on the party?"

"I am simply making out a fact and guessing at another," insisted Shane. "The fact is that a Coachman fly hooked in the throat of a trout taken from Strawn's creel had really been broken from Breeling's leader. My only chance of error lies in the possibility that some one, in the night, exchanged leaders with Breeling."

"It would be all right," I objected, "if there were motives. But what possible difference does it make whether Strawn was or was not on Lost Creek?"

"Maybe," suggested Shane dreamily, "if we took a hike to Lost Creek we'd find a motive. Want to tackle it, O'Doul?"

"Rubbish!" repeated O'Doul. "You're too mysteriously suspicious, Shane. That's a failing I've always found in professional detectives. Whelan, Wanless and Breeling admit they were there. Their stories check. They report a grave fifteen years old, grass grown, whose epitaph employs the term murder. Suppose we went up. We'd only see what Whelan, Wanless and Breeling saw. We could prove nothing and only make fools of ourselves dubbing around."

Buck Weaver called breakfast, to which we repaired. The others were up. Over coffee and fried trout the seven of us discussed the findings at Lost Creek.

"A locoed hermit living up there," was O'Doul's guess, "mourning over the death of a partner these last fifteen years and imagining that he was murdered."

No one ventured a better guess. The final consensus of opinion was to let the matter drop and enjoy fishing here on Fall River.

Thus, during the morning, we fished near camp. Every one came in at noon with a more or less respectable catch of Eastern brooks, with the exception of Pat Shane. Shane had not one single trout in his creel.

Pat Shane's inexpertness in whipping riffles with flies had been a standing joke in camp ever since the first day of our expedition. Some men seem born with the knack of fly fishing, and some seem doomed to awkwardness in that particular sport. Shane came distinctly under the latter head, and this morning was not the first time he had come in with an empty creel.

We joked him at lunch. Good naturedly he retorted:

"Well, back East where I came from we don't fish this way. We use a bait hook with a worm on it, and a sinker. We let our worm sink to the bottom of the mill pond, and pretty soon here comes along a catfish or a carp. We got the line tied to our finger and when the fish jerks it wakes us up. Nice easy way to fish."

"That's what we Westerners call 'nigger fishin',' " commented Frank O'Doul. "Trout are game, but it's not impossible to catch even a trout that way, Shane. Only you got to fish in the pools and the beaver dams."

"That's right," agreed the ex-cattleman, Whelan. "When it comes right down to brass tacks, all fish are brothers and sisters under their scales, and I've never seen one yet that didn't look upon an earthworm as prime fodder."

Luther Strawn, the most ethical fisherman in the party, snorted his disgust. Bait fishing for trout was to Strawn high treason against the gods of sport.

But Shane was delighted.

"Hot dawg!" he exclaimed. "Watch my smoke from now on." And immediately after lunch he was turning over rocks and logs for worms.

He found a few and came back to rig up a bait line.

"Anybody got a bait hook, a lead sinker and a cork?" he asked.

"You don't need a cork," O'Doul told him. "You let the sinker and the bait go clear to the bottom. Yes, I've got some bait hooks in a small tackle box which I carry in my creel. And very likely you'll find a lead sinker or two. Haven't fallen low enough to use 'em so far this season, but in my time I've been guilty. Help yourself, Shane."

Again Luther Strawn snorted his disgust.

"Nigger fishin'!" he booed. "The honor of our party is ruined forever." He strode off upcañon with his fly rod.

Strawn's attitude made no difference to Shane. He went to O'Doul's creel, which hung hearby, and delved therein for bait hooks and sinkers. Soon he was busy rigging his bait tackle, all the while whistling happily like a schoolboy. He stripped the flies from his six-foot leader and on the end loop hung the bait hook, an ordinary No. 4 fishhook capable of impaling a fair sized worm. I then saw him slitting a small ball of lead with his knife, so that he could wedge it on the leader about eight inches above the hook.

SHANE went to the nearest beaver dam hole in the river. When the rest of us passed him for our afternoon of fly fishing, we saw him sitting on the bank reading a magazine, his line set and his rod parked. He had cast his sinker and bait into a pool seven feet deep and was patiently waiting exactly as if he were angling for catfish or carp.

We laughed, but at supper he turned the laugh on us. He came in with only one trout, but it was a whopper, breaking the camp record for weight. A grand fish, an old Eastern brook trout, sixteen inches long and weighing two pounds.

We all admired it, even Strawn. We let it hang as a glorified trophy while we ate supper, a thing of beauty as colorful as the sunset itself. A magnificent Eastern brook! For my part I preferred Eastern brooks to natives. It has always been my opinion that the carmine dotted trout from the Alleghanies is the fanciest fish that swims fresh water, unless it is the Loch Leven trout of Scotland; likewise a char, whose red spots are even bigger and more brilliant than an Eastern brook's.

But Pat Shane, who should have been chortling with glee, was peculiarly sober tonight. He was pensive. He rubbed the clusters of tiny little Irish freckles just under his eyes and looked down at the ground, deep in thought. He did not bask in the sunlight of our applause and approbation, as he might have. In fact, he seemed to ignore his own big trout. He broke in with a surprising comment:

"Men, after we've rested a few days, let's every mother's son of us pack up and hike for the lost cabin on Lost Creek. There's a mystery there. We haven't scratched it yet. I—well, I've simply got a hunch. I can't explain it. We—"

"We settled that, didn't we?" inserted O'Doul a trifle impatiently. "We decided to let the matter drop."

"Yeh," chimed in Todd Whelan. "Why waste a good fishing vacation fiddling with a mystery fifteen years old?"

"Fifteen years old?" echoed Shane. "What would you say if I ventured a guess that it's age is more like fifteen hours?"

His tone and his manner impressed me. I knew Pat Shane better than the rest, and I divined that he had stumbled upon something which he did not see fit to divulge. What was it? This morning Shane himself had been quite willing to let the Lost Creek matter drop. Now he seemed to be keen on taking it up again. What theories had penetrated his active young brain this afternoon, as he had lolled by the beaver dam, fishing with worm and sinker?

Frank O'Doul echoed my own musings.

"Speak up, Shane," he demanded crisply. "If you know anything, let's have it."

"I know nothing," answered Shane. "I merely advise, and urgently, that we all go to Lost Creek. Surely Wanless, Breeling and Whelan, having made the trip, could among them guide us to the spot. Sticking together, we couldn't get lost. We needn't go tomorrow or the next day, but only after we're all well rested."

"You couldn't get me up that mountain again for a thousand heifers," exploded Todd Whelan.

Every one objected to the idea except Carl Wanless.

"I *would* like to retrieve my rifle," admitted Wanless. "Shane's right; we wouldn't get lost if we stuck together. I logged a dozen landmarks on the way back."

Nothing came of the discussion that night. But continuously during the next three days Shane renewed it. Oddly, he never went back to the beaver dam to fish with bait and sinker. He did not fish at all.

"I'm resting on my laurels," he said, and let it go at that.

We'd sit around the fire of evenings, seven of us, five men of fifty-odd years and two of thirty, and persistently Shane would lead the discussion to the lost cabin on Lost Creek. He was as stubborn about it as a bulldog.

"Let's all go up there," he'd say, over and over again.

One by one, he won the crowd. I was his first ally, and Wanless, the Teutonic Del Norte lumberman, was his second. Wanless simply gave as a motive for acquiescence his desire to retrieve a forty-dollar rifle.

My own motive for acquiescence was as natural. I, Paul Valentine, descendant of the Pablo Valentinos, was the owner of this ancient grant which comprised the lofty wildernesses of Mystery Mountain. I knew now that there was a trespasser on my estate, some interloper who was living there in a cabin he must have built himself. I wanted to see this fellow, to offer him, say, a thousand dollars for his labor in building the cabin and then order him to vacate. The cabin would then be my own property, morally as well as legally, and certainly an estate of this size could afford one house.

Or, as an alternate, I would in the presence of witnesses lease the cabin site to the squatter for one dollar a year. Thus he could never advance, with the passage of decades, a squatter's title to the cabin site and environs.

O'Doul admitted that I was quite justified in this stand.

One by one the others acquiesced. Whelan held out to the last. In fact, I am sure that Whelan would never have gone with us except that to have refused would mean being left in Fall River Cañon alone.

IN THE end we cached the pup tents. The eight of us, including Buck Weaver, made the lightest of packs. Early of a morning exactly a week after the other Lost Creek exploration party had set out, we began an uphill trek toward the same destination.

It was a grind. We climbed a rocky slope from Fall River, gaining in two hours perhaps a thousand feet in altitude.

"The temptation," remarked Wanless as we reached the top, "is to drop down the other side of this mountain into the next valley. That's what led to our other party's getting lost. The bald knob to the right is one of my landmarks. We got to stay right on this ridge and scramble around the cliffs of that knob."

We did so, resting frequently. Food we had with us. Seep springs provided water. Beyond the knob Wanless found his next landmark, a deep saddle between the heads of two hollows.

"Wanless is right," agreed Luther Strawn as we crossed the saddle. "It's a darn' good idea to keep out of the hollows. Ridges are better walking and you see farther."

We trekked on, eight men in single file. Wanless led the way, followed by the tall and cadaverous district attorney, Frank O'Doul. Last straggled the derby hatted undertaker, Breeling. Breeling had had better sense than to wear his waders this time. Nor, to my surprise, had he complained very much about making the trip. Yet he was the laggard of our trek, and for his sake we did not push the pace, but rested at every seep of water. Also we halted, cautiously, at every interlocking set of hollow heads.

Finally we did abandon the ridge and dip into a shallow valley, but only because both Whelan and Wanless recognized a landmark, an L-shaped aspen park, pea green against purple, on the other side.

Although I think we kept the most direct route to Lost Creek, we were pretty well scratched, stone bruised and weary by noon.

"I don't see how Breeling ever made it in those hip boots!" marveled Shane.

At two in the afternoon we actually sighted Lost Creek. It burst upon us as we topped a rise, a natural plateau meadow fringed by aspens, with only an occasional coniferous plant in sight.

We could see Lost Creek, a rippling crystal thread a man could cross in three strides, which seemed to end in a gravel meadow directly below us. Its fall at this point flattened, although upstream we could see riffles and hear the murmur of falls. More to the point, directly on the bank of the lower reaches of the stream stood a small log cabin.

To this hidden domicile of the wilderness we came, not a little in awe, I think, wondering what breed of human had chosen such isolation for a home.

Whoever he was, he was not in evidence. The cabin proved to have but one door and a single window. The window was covered with oiled paper. The roof was rudely gabled, but protected only by sod. The workmanship was of the crudest. The logs were hardly hewn at all, and had been chinked with mud.

"Still," commented Wanless, who was a lumberman, "some of the material must have been packed up here on a mule. The window sash and door, anyway." He tried the door. It was locked, just as three earlier visitors had reported finding it.

O'Doul pressed by Wanless and knocked loudly on the door. There was no response. I saw Shane trying to peer through or by the oiled paper over the window. He turned away, and his eyes roved to the woodpile.

"I looked there the first thing," remarked Carl Wanless. "My .32 rifle is not there, which means the tenant has taken it into the house. He'd naturally do that."

"But I see the ax," exclaimed Shane, going over and picking up an ax. "Its blade is not bright, like you reported. The steel is beginning to discolor with rust. That means it probably hasn't been used since the showery weather we had a few days ago."

"Gee! Look at that cat!" exclaimed Strawn, as a lean Maltese cat came around the corner of the cabin, saw us, then dashed like a squirrel for the nearest tree and shinned up.

"What makes the tame cat wild?" inquired Pat Shane with a grin. "Wanless reported that a week ago the cat was sitting calmly on the stoop and merely purred at his approach."

We were all looking up at the cat, now high in the tree, and Shane had to answer his own question.

"It merely indicates," he suggested, "that the cat has had no human company for the past week. It's had to rustle its own food from the woods. Its semi-wild manner checks with the half rusty ax."

"But there's a good stiff breeze blowing," commented the lanky district attorney, O'Doul. "And I don't hear any bell. Meaning no offense, I confess I always have doubted the existence of that bell. I'll believe it only when I hear it ring."

Indeed there was a breeze blowing at the moment of more than ordinary force. I strained my ears, but, like O'Doul, could hear no tinkling of a bell.

"It was right over there in that clump of aspens," reported Whelan, pointing to the east.

Without a word Shane started that way. The rest of us straggled along in his wake. Solemnly, except for O'Doul's facetious suggestions:

"Breeling, you're last in line, whereas by rights you should be first. As an undertaker you should lead the procession to the grave."

We entered the aspen copse. It was solid white bark except for one huge lone pine on a ledge of higher ground just to the right.

"Am I heading right?" Shane called back to Whelan.

"You ought to stub your toe on the headstone in the next ten strides," confirmed Whelan.

"But why don't the bell ring?" complained O'Doul ironically. "Somehow, in order to attune my soul to mourn properly at this belated funeral, I need the tintinabulations of a bell."

The aspens were quaking, murmuring in sylvan harmony with the breeze. But their quaking rang no bell.

"We've passed the place, I think," wheezed Breeling from the tail of the line.

I recalled that Breeling and Whelan were the only ones who, according to their own reports, had actually seen the bell and the grave.

"I'm like O'Doul," grunted Strawn from the position next to last in line. "From the first, the whole thing has sounded to me like a brainstorm."

"Call me a liar, do you?" barked Whelan, turning querulously.

Before Strawn could reply, Shane shouted:

"Whoa, everybody! Here we are!"

WE CROWDED up to positions abreast of Shane.

There, under a quaking-asp, was the grave. The mound of earth, so old that the grass had regrown on it, the white headpost of sandstone—it was all there just as reported by Whelan and Breeling.

But there was more. A .32 caliber rifle lay athwart the grave. I heard a gasp next to me and turned to see that Carl Wanless, the Del Norte lumberman, had become extremely agitated. I knew immediately that the rifle was his own, the one he had left, or had claimed to leave, on the woodpile at the cabin.

"I did," Wanless fairly shrieked, as if echoing my thought.

"Did what?" barked O'Doul bruskly.

"Left it on the woodpile," cried Wanless, whose usual even temper seemed cut to nervous shreds.

"It's been fired," reported Pat Shane, who had by now picked the rifle up, opened the magazine and exposed the dented cap of an empty brass shell. He passed the weapon to O'Doul, then dropped to his knees on the grave.

I saw him examining, at close range, an

epitaph scratched on the white, upright sandstone. O'Doul stood over him, not looking at all at the rifle in his hand, but himself staring at the headstone.

In fact, I think we had all seen, by now, that thing which had caused Shane to drop to his knees for close inspection.

Dark red spots. There were stains, almost black red, on the white surface of the headstone; I sensed immediately that they were stains of blood.

We stood about, breathless. The leaves of the aspens rustled overhead. I myself had forgotten the bell. So, I think, had all the others, for no one was looking up to see whether or not it hung on the limb above us, and if so why it was not tinkling in rhythm with the swaying boughs. Our eyes and our thoughts were magnetized by the dark red stains on the grave of a man dead these fifteen years.

"There's been an appendix," Shane was saying, "added to the epitaph since you and Breeling were here, Whelan. And yes, if I'm a judge, those stains came from the veins of a human body. O'Doul, we stand on the scene of two crimes—one fifteen years old, the other not over a week old. Since you're district attorney of this territory, I suggest you make careful note of the amended epitaph."

O'Doul, dropping to his bony knees, did so.

Then, one by one, we all took a turn at reading the weird syllables which had been scratched, probably with the point of a knife blade, on the upright headstone of the grave.

I suppressed my curiosity until the last, waiting until the rest were done. What I read was:

Here Lies Jonathan Bart
Born, Jan 29th, 1874
Murdered, August 13th, 1909

These lines were exactly as previously reported by Whelan and Breeling. But below, in fresher scratching, obviously the more recent inscription, was added this startling line:

The murderer returned today, Sept. 4th, 1924

When I arose to my feet I wondered whether my face was as near the hue of chalk as the rest, or if the bases of their own spines were as chilly as my own.

September 4th, 1924! That was the very day that Whelan, Wanless and Breeling had admitted coming by this cabin; the very day that Luther Strawn had denied coming by here, although his creel contained native trout. It was the very day that Carl Wanless had claimed leaving his rifle on a woodpile, although we now found it here at the grave.

Which of those visitors had come first and which last? None of them had fixed the time with closer accuracy than lay in a range of several hours near midday. If they had it would have meant little, I realized, because the guilty man would of course deliberately have misled us as to the hour of his own visit. Certainly one of the four wanderers of September 4th, at least, was lying by the clock.

O'Doul, I could see, was looking sternly from Whelan to Wanless to Breeling to Strawn. He was more than stern; he was austere. He was almost viciously accusative, had suddenly assumed the mien of a prosecutor at a criminal bar.

Yet he spoke no word. He stood there, a harsh tribunal, and his hawk eyes seemed to be trying to bore through the masks of these four men. An odd fancy came to me at the moment. I knew that O'Doul was deep—deep and shrewd. The fancy was that he may have known all the while about this ancient crime on Mystery Mountain. It lay within his province as district attorney. Suppose that his suspicions had been that guilt lay among Wanless, Whelan, Breeling and Strawn!

When I thought of it, I realized that it was O'Doul who had introduced us to these four men and who was responsible for their inclusion in the party. Suppose that all the while he had schemed this present dramatic tableau about the grave, even though at times seeming to dissent to the stories of exploration. He was deep—his dissenting might have been pure byplay.

Such, at all events, was the fancy which seized me as we stood there under the aspen. It was checked by the fact that O'Doul seemed to accept as a matter of course the amendment to the epitaph, "*The murderer returned today, Sept. 4th, 1924.*" The only query in his attitude was:

"Which was that murderer? Whelan, Wanless, Breeling or Strawn?"

Where had each of these four men been fifteen years ago? I wondered. What did I, or Shane, or even O'Doul know of their pasts? For that matter, I thought, what did they know of my own? How little do any of us really know of our comrade, the secrets and the motives of his past?

And so we stood there under the aspen boughs, high in this primeval wilderness of Mystery Mountain, in poses of mutual challenge and suspicion. The cold sweat was beading on every one of our brows. Buck Weaver, the grizzled old camp cook, was still in attendance. He alone, I thought, was the only one entirely outside the possibilities of incrimination. He alone could not have been on this spot a week ago. Any of the other seven of us could have, even Shane, O'Doul or myself. For we three had been out in search of the other four.

We had not been here, I knew, yet the presence of one of us would have been physically possible. That Wanless, Whelan and Breeling had been here was certain, for they admitted it, except that Wanless admitted advancing only as far as the cabin. Due to lack of breeze, he had not heard the tinkling bell, and thus—

The bell! I had forgotten the bell. Recalling it now, I looked up, straight overhead. I was aware that Pat Shane, by my side, was also looking up. Our poses caused the others to tilt their chins, to look upward into the boughs of the tree under which we stood.

For a silent moment the eight of us stood there, gaping upward like yokels at a passing airship. And every one of sixteen eyes saw the brass bell.

IT WAS there. It had not been removed. There it hung, a brass bell, bound by some sort of cord to a limb. And bound for such duration of years that the bark had grown around the cord.

Not only was it there, but it was swaying with the quaking bough, itself swayed in the cradle of the wind. The bell was swaying, but not ringing. Something had stilled its sylvan voice. Its tongue of mystery no longer rolled within its brazen cheek.

"Somebody," announced Pat Shane, "has wedged a shim up into the cone of the bell, a shim which holds the clapper rigidly in one constant position. You see it, don't you? I can't make out just what it is, but the shim is itself bell shaped and just fits the hollow of the cone. Have I your permission to investigate, O'Doul?"

O'Doul gravely assented. Shane was about to climb the bole of the tree, when he observed a convenient stepping stone to the task of ascension. He stepped up on top of the upright headstone of the grave, a pedestal which arose two feet above the ground.

Standing now at full height on the stone and reaching upward, Shane's fingers touched the bell. He plucked out that shim which was wedged within its conical interior.

He handed it down, and we saw why it had so perfectly fit the bell. It was a cone itself, a pine cone. Some one had wedged a pine cone within the hollow of the bell. A convenient shim, I admitted, for there were a score of cones lying about on the ground, cones which had rolled down from that lone pine on the ledge to our right.

Ting-a-ling! Ling! Ling!

The bell now found its voice. Its tongue unleashed, it rang once more. It continued to tinkle with every quake of the bough, with every rustle of the leaves. *Ting-a-ling—ling! Ting-a-ling!*

Sweet music, perhaps, but it made me shiver.

Shane, still standing on the headstone, looked gravely down into the eyes of

Frank O'Doul. These two seemed to confer silently. I wondered whether they had exchanged confidences of suspicion unknown to me. O'Doul still held Wanless' .32 rifle. Jerkily he turned to Wanless.

"Wanless, are you sure you left this rifle on the woodpile? Which one of you three men stuck the pine cone in the bell? And why? What was the shooting about? Who was hit? Where's the body? Dammit, what about this amendment to the epitaph, 'The murderer returned today, September 4th, 1924?' That was the very day three of you admit being here."

He rasped the questions in such swift order, firing them in such vicious volley, that he could hardly have expected replies. Yet he got replies, vociferously.

Breeling began wheezing a shrill series of denials that he knew anything more than the rest of us. Wanless, the wiry little lumberman with the Van Dyke beard, yelped—

"I *did* leave my rifle at the cabin; and I never saw this grave or bell until now."

Ting-a-ling-ling-ling! The bell tinkled all the while above his head. Wanless looked up at it and flinched. It came to me for the first time that Carl Wanless, as a personality, had never been any too convincing. He claimed to be a German but was hardly of Teuton type. I recalled his mention that he had come over from Germany only ten years ago, yet there was no trace of foreign accent in his speech. Then there was his Van Dyke beard. To me it did not fit a small town lumberman. A doctor, a lawyer, an engineer might wear one, I thought, but never a small town lumberman.

And Whelan, the bushy browed, stockily built veteran who purported to be a retired cattleman. What about him? Just now he was engaged in sullen bicker with O'Doul.

"I don't like your talk, O'Doul. You insinuate I know something, do you? To hell with you! Keep a lock on your tongue. I don't give a hang if you are district attorney."

Hard boiled, in a way, I admitted, but hardly hard boiled enough for a retired cattleman under fire. The profanity was a degree too mild. I looked at Whelan's legs. They were straight. Had this man really spent his early life in the saddle?

Pat Shane, I saw, seemed more interested in Luther Strawn. There was astute speculation in his regard, as he covertly watched Strawn, the man who had never named his past occupations, he of whom we knew nothing except that he was independently rich and an expert fisherman. It struck me now that Strawn, of all of us, best fitted the rôle of a man of mystery.

During O'Doul's altercation with Whelan, Breeling and Wanless, I noticed that Strawn had withdrawn to an opposite side of the circle. He was now just at the rear of O'Doul's left shoulder, facing the trio being addressed by O'Doul, thus having removed himself as a unit of their party. He was not claiming company with them. He was denying any share of their adventures of September 4th, just as he had denied having found Lost Creek at all. He spoke no word. He evaded meeting Shane's eyes, then turned to Buck Weaver to borrow a cigaret.

It was the first time I had ever seen Strawn light a cigaret; he had been an inveterate user of a pipe.

"Shane," rasped O'Doul suddenly, "I'd like to talk with you in private. You might come along too, Valentine. The rest of you men please wait for us here."

O'Doul led Shane and me off about fifty paces into the woods.

"Now, Shane," began O'Doul, "what have *you* got under *your* hat?"

"The same as you, O'Doul," returned Pat Shane. "A buzzing brain, mainly."

"But what do you know? Naturally, I recall that crack you made down in camp on Fall River, the evening you'd come in with the big trout. Sometime that afternoon, while you were bait fishing in the beaver dam hole, you seemed to acquire some deep rooted conviction. What was it all about? What could a two-pound trout caught in Fall River have to do with a mystery on Lost Creek? Talk, Shane. I'm in no mood to temporize."

"I'm in no mood to temporize myself," returned Shane. "If I knew anything, I'd tell you."

"But you made a crack," snapped O'Doul, "about the crime up here being perhaps fifteen hours old instead of fifteen years. What was your idea?"

"My idea," hedged Shane, "was to egg you fellows on to making a trek up here. I succeeded, didn't I? And it turns out to be worth while, doesn't it? What are you kicking about? Our cue now, it seems to me, is to follow up those bloodstains on the grave. The .32 rifle was fired and flung aside, which indicates that the man whose blood was shed was shot. Not fatally, or we'd find his body. Anyway he must have lived for some time, else he couldn't have written that amendment to the epitaph. We may assume he survived the wound and crawled off into the woods."

"Exactly," agreed O'Doul. He turned to me. "Valentine, what are your ideas? Of the four men who were up here a week ago, Wanless, Whelan, Strawn and Breeling, whom would you be inclined to suspect?"

"My opinion would be amateurish," I countered. "Shane's would be more competent. In fact, I call it luck that Shane happens to be with us. Pat has quite a rep back East as a solver of murder mysteries. You may recall that it was he who solved that murder at Mystery Lake. I relinquish the floor to Pat Shane."

O'Doul scowled. Without inviting further opinion from Shane, he began listing the elements himself, tapping his lean fingers.

"The soundest evidence," mused O'Doul aloud, "naturally hangs on Carl Wanless. It is his rifle that we find here, fired, upon the apparent scene of a bloody conflict. He claims to have left it at the cabin. Claims that he abandoned it because of its weight. It sounded fishy to me at the time, and sounds fishier now."

"All our clues are bound to be fishy, on a trip like this." Shane smiled, and O'Doul rebuked his levity with a frown.

"Still," resumed O'Doul, "it's physically possible that Wanless did leave his rifle at the cabin, that a later caller picked it up, bringing it along on his probably fearsome trip of investigation to the ringing bell. As a second likely suspect, we have Strawn. If Strawn shot a man here, his cue would be to claim he'd never found Lost Creek at all. He so claimed, though we found Lost Creek natives in his creel.

"And then we have Breeling. Breeling admits being here. He even admits coming to the grave. And by Shane's broken Royal Coachman fly clue, we might admit that it was Breeling who actually caught the natives found in Strawn's creel. Hearing our discussion of the spots on trout that night, he might have framed his own fish on Strawn in order to widen the field of incrimination. Anyway, Breeling is implicated, though not seriously as yet. Whelan seems to be the only one of the four lost pilgrims on whom we have nothing at all."

"Except," amended Pat Shane quickly, "that Whelan was the most reluctant of all to revisit Lost Creek."

"A natural timidity," suggested O'Doul.

"Is a bull throated, bushy browed ex-cattleman likely to be timid?" parried Shane. "As for the fact that three of the four admitted that they were at the cabin," he resumed, "it is likely that the guilty man was afraid to take the chance of denying it. Recall that they all had a feeling they were being watched. Strawn, if guilty, took a chance on denial. But it was a chance. Because Strawn might have been seen here. Then where would he be? But after all, O'Doul, aren't we putting the cart before the horse? The usual course is to find the body and then trace the murderer. In this case we've found no body, so it's hardly time to be accusing any one of assault. My suggestion would be to search the cabin for more evidence."

O'Doul agreed, and we strode back to where our party awaited beneath the tinkling bell.

THEY were standing about, clearly nervous, except Buck Weaver. The grizzled camp cook was seated with his back against a tree, puffing a cigaret.

"Well?" challenged Whelan peevishly, addressing O'Doul.

"Well?" echoed Breeling shrilly. He had removed his derby hat and was mopping sweat from his bulging forehead.

"Any convictions yet?" inquired Wanless with a touch of sarcasm.

Luther Strawn, as before, was standing aloof from the rest. He spoke no word at our approach.

"We'll all repair to the cabin," decreed O'Doul, and led the way.

We left the aspen copse and again came to the old log cabin. There we decided that on two authorities we were well justified in crashing the oiled paper window—on O'Doul's authority as district attorney, on my authority as owner of the land on which the improvement stood.

O'Doul still carried the .32 rifle. With this he punched out the oil paper, revealing the gloomy interior of the cabin. How much gloomier it would have been before the punching out of the oiled paper I could well imagine.

Before any one else could make a move, Pat Shane had shinned through that window like a monkey. A moment later he opened the door, by the simple process of removing a bar. This flooded the interior with indirect light. Afterward Shane told me that he had climbed in ahead of the rest of us so that the guilty man could not be first and destroy a vital clue. Anyway he was first, and the rest of us filed in through the open door.

It was the rudest of interiors. The floor was earthen. There was no furniture except one home made chair and cot. There was no provision for cooking other than a stone hearth.

But our eyes by now, of course, were held by the corpse on the cot. Somehow I had half expected to find just such a gruesome greeting as this. And it was there. The master of the house, if such he was, was dead.

He had died in bed under blankets. His pose was that of a man seeking normal rest. The face, thin and bloodless, was otherwise most natural. Breeling later pronounced that he had not been dead more than two days, possibly not more than twenty-four hours, an opinion which Breeling, as an undertaker, was well qualified to give.

In all solemnity we assembled about this corpse on the cot. A sheet of paper was pinned to the blanket, just over the dead man's breast. No intruder could possibly have missed it. Obviously the deceased had intended that it be found with his body.

The paper was closely written, in a surprisingly good hand, the text not completed on the upward side of the sheet. I think we all saw it at about the same time.

And I think we all realized, too, that this man must have died from a bullet wound received a week ago under the bell, and that the murderer was now of our own company. Such was the degree of awesome trepidation common to us all, however, that I doubt if the most astute psychologist could have picked the guilty face.

District Attorney O'Doul unpinned the sheet of paper, took it to the lighter area of the doorway and began to read. We followed, clustered around him. O'Doul turned the testament over and read to the end, then went painstakingly through it for the second time.

"He accuses a man named Jim Thorne," he told Pat Shane. "Any of you ever heard of a Jim Thorne?"

None of us had, but the answer was plain enough. The victim had known a man fifteen years ago as Jim Thorne. By the epitaph on the gravestone he was a murderer then, as now. Few murderers keep the same name fifteen years.

"A description?" asked Shane softly.

"This paper," informed O'Doul, "describes no one. It simply accuses Jim Thorne of two murders, one in 1909 and one in 1924. To save time, read it aloud to the others, Shane."

Pat Shane took the paper and, carefully enunciating, he read the text aloud:

"I, PHINEAS BART, near unto bodily collapse but still in sound mind, set down hereon the causes of my own death, anticipated, and that of my brother, Jonathan, laid away these fifteen years.

"Three of us came here to Lost Creek in the year 1909, Jim Thorne, Jonathan Bart and myself. We came for a season of hunting and fishing. We were single men except for Jonathan, whose wife we had left in Culebra City. On August 13th, 1909, Jonathan was returning along the bank of Lost Creek toward our camp higher up. He heard a bell in the aspens to his right. He knew that it must be the bell of our pack mare which, in spite of her bell, had strayed beyond our hearing for more than a week.

"Jonathan went into the aspens and found the mare. But in doing so he stepped within the jaws of a huge bear trap, set, but abandoned or forgotten by earlier hunters. The snapping jaws broke Jonathan's ankle. He was not a strong man, was by habit and temperament, in fact, something of a student and book lover as I am myself. And this trap was of a size to hold the mightiest bear. It was secured, by padlocked chain, to the base of an aspen—the same tree on which now hangs the bell."

Shane stopped reading for a moment, his eyes roving from man to man of us, his breathless audience. He then cocked his head quizzically, and I knew he was listening to the bell. The breeze had freshened and through the open door we could hear the bell even from here.

Ting-a-ling! Ling-ling!

A voice in the wilderness. A voice of mystery, was my thought, to all but one of us. With what hideous pressure it must have borne upon the senses of that one exception, upon him who was guilty, upon him whom Phineas Bart had known as Jim Thorne!

My gaze strayed to the face of the dead man on the cot. It was a distinctly intellectual face, even in death. And near the cot I saw a shelf of books. They were almost in tatters by handling, but I could read a few titles: "Ben Hur," "Pilgrim's Progress," "The Rise of Silas Lapham," and they gave me something of an insight into the character of Phineas Bart. A recluse, a hermit, but withal a scholar. It explained the purity of his diction in this last testament now being read by Shane.

"Jonathan," resumed Shane, "weakened by the broken ankle, struggled in the trap. He could not drag it from the tree. He could not release himself. He shouted. And with good motive, for he knew that he had preceded Jim Thorne and myself on the trek upcreek to camp. We, singly and separately, were due to pass by later in the day. Passing, we should hear the shoutings of Jonathan.

"So my brother shouted until he was hoarse and faint. His voice failing, he had the happy inspiration of using the bell from the bell mare. The mare still stood by, and Jonathan removed the bell. He stood in the trap shaking the bell vigorously. Hours passed. He became weaker all the while, suffering the most acute pain. The mare wandered off, grazing. Finally Jonathan had the further inspiration of letting the wind, which was high that day, ring the bell for him.

"So he stood to full height and caught the lowest hanging twigs at the end of an aspen bough. He pulled the bough down to him, and attached the bell by its cord of green buckskin. When he released his hold, the bough and the bell sprang upward a foot or two beyond his reach. The bough swayed in the wind and the bell tinkled, an effective summons to the distress of Jonathan Bart.

"Jim Thorne came first up Lost Creek and heard the bell. He investigated, thinking to retrieve our strayed pack mare. He found Jonathan had fainted in the trap, the bell ringing overhead.

"Thorne had been attentive to Jonathan's wife, a woman whom I had always thought to be more of Thorne's world than of our own. Thorne was a murderer at heart, and he now murdered my brother, Jonathan. With the blackest premeditation he enacted this crime, albeit by a method under which no court of justice ever could, or ever can, convict him. He did not touch Jonathan. He did not assault him, yet morally he killed in cold blood as surely as though he had plunged a dagger through Jonathan's heart.

"All Thorne did was to pick up a pine cone and stuff it in the bell. The bell ceased to ring. Thorne went on to camp. An hour later I came along Lost Creek. Had the bell been tinkling I would have heard and saved my brother. But it was silent. I passed on. I joined Thorne. Missing Jonathan, I searched. Thorne pretended to search. When we at last found him in the trap, he had been dead a week."

Again Shane paused in his reading. I saw him glance back at a paragraph higher on his sheet, as though he wished to fix in his mind some particular effect of the testimony. For moments he reread silently to himself, his brow furrowed, quite ignoring our common suspense.

We stood about on the earthen floor of the cabin, waiting nervously. O'Doul, who had already read the text, posed in the open doorway with his back to Shane, gazing moodily out across the aspen parks of Mystery Mountain. The others were fidgeting, plainly impatient. The beetle browed Breeling was perspiring copiously. Strawn stood aloof, and I saw him hold a lighted match to a pipe which contained no tobacco at all. I doubt if he knew what he was doing. Whelan and Wanless, lips parted, cheeks as white as marble, were at times casting fearsome, sidewise glances at the corpse on the cot.

Came to us from without the whisperings of the pines and the aspens, mingling now eternally with the refrain of a tinkling bell.

Ting-a-ling! Ling-ling!

Instead of resuming immediately, Shane saw fit to discuss a point of the testimony.

"The bell," he suggested, "would be about the same height above the ground as it was fifteen years ago. Trees grow upward from the top, the trunk diameter increases, but a given horizontal bough remains the same distance from the ground. Jonathan Bart caught the low hanging twigs at the branch end, pulled down to him the thicker stem of the bough and secured the bell. Released, the elastic limb flew up two feet. Now one has to stand on the grave stone to reach the bell. So that part of it checks nicely."

"But, dammit, Shane, get on with the letter," urged Whelan.

"The body of my brother sorely needed burial," ran the testimony of Phineas Bart as continued by Shane, "and so Thorne and I, after sewing it in canvas, buried it on the spot. We placed a headstone, which I did not inscribe at the time.

"I had loved Jonathan dearly, and I remained to mourn at his grave while Jim Thorne went down to Culebra City to carry the sad news to Jonathan's wife, and to consult with her about disinterment for reburial.

"Thus far I knew nothing of the bell. It was not ringing, because of the pine cone jammed within it. During the process of burial, I had had no occasion to look upward into the boughs of the tree.

"Days later, while alone up there, I chanced to look up and I saw the bell. I saw, too, that some one had killed its voice with a pine cone. I knew that Jonathan would not have foiled his own succor by muzzling the bell. Who, then, could have done it but Thorne?

"I knew Thorne had been amorously attentive to Jonathan's wife. Thus I made a guess as to the true sequence of events. It was, admittedly, a hazardous guess, supported only by the significance of the pine cone in the bell. Yet it convinced me, Phineas Bart, and I conceived Thorne as a murderer.

"When he returned, I wanted him to *know that I knew.* He was outside of any possible conviction. All I could do would be to let him *know that I knew.* So I inscribed upon the headstone:

Here Lies Jonathan Bart
Born, Jan 29th, 1874
Murdered, August 13th, 1909

"Let Jim Thorne see that epitaph when he returned, was my thought; if the shoe of guilt fitted, he could wear it.

"But he did not come back. I at length presumed that he had gone off with my brother's widow, whom I had long suspected of infidelity. I remained on Lost Creek. I was loath to leave my brother, even though he lay cold in his grave. I had loved him even as David had loved him, that other Jonathan, who was the son of Saul.

"So I remained. In time I built a rude cabin on the bank of Lost Creek.

"And in fifteen years again came Jim Thorne. I saw him coming up Lost Creek. In his hand was a rod and on his shoulder was a creel for fish. Even at a distance I knew him as Jim Thorne.

"And now, as ever, I wanted him to *know that I knew.* So I went to the aspen copse, stood on the gravestone and removed the pine cone from the bell. When Thorne passed at the nearest point of the creek, I expected him to hear the bell ringing.

"The bell, however, did not ring. It swayed but it did not ring. Thus Thorne did not hear and passed on up Lost Creek. I realized that the hinge of the bell clapper must be stiff, somewhat rusted these fifteen years in rains and snows, cramped all the while by the pine cone. So I now again stood on the headstone and oiled the bell, using my can of gun oil. Loosened and lubricated, the bell now tinkled with each fresh breeze.

"Thorne, I thought, would hear it when he passed back down the creek. But, as I waited, it developed that Thorne was only one of a party of four men who had that day become separated in this wilderness. At all events three other men appeared, at intervals of about an hour, on the banks of Lost Creek. Fishermen all. I, spying from the aspens, saw them, and they were men I had never seen before."

Luther Strawn interrupted Shane.

"Are you sure you read that correctly, Shane? Does he say three *other* men, making four in all? If so he lies. Because *I* never saw Lost Creek until today."

Strawn was extremely tense in this denial. His face had turned beet red. He knew that every eye in the room was on him. For here was forceful evidence, in writing, that all four of the lost quartette had arrived at the site of mystery. It checked the clue of the native trout in Strawn's creel. More to the point, it gave significance to Strawn's overly quick objection at this moment. The naming of four visitors had drawn a rise from him too instantly.

This fact had obviously impressed District Attorney Frank O'Doul. His regard was colder and harsher than ever as he now looked upon Strawn. No one answered Strawn, and the man fell to fidgeting with his pipe. I became quite convinced that Strawn had actually been to the cabin that day a week ago. Some powerful motive must have caused him to deny his visit. Caught with native trout in his creel, he must have attempted to remove the clue by surreptitiously trading leaders with Breeling. Knowing that we at camp had seen the natives and were suspicious of his denial, he could have broken a Coachman fly from Breeling's line and inserted the fly into the throat of one of his own long dead fish. That would have served the same purpose as trading leaders.

The issue of Strawn was getting more complicated all the while. And more important, since the last testament of a dead man plainly established four visitors at Lost Creek.

Shane read on:

"Of these three unknown visitors, only two heard the tinkling bell for the reason that a dead calm prevailed during the presence of the third. The two who heard, separately and in the turn of their visits, came to investigate. Each behaved with the normal deportment of surprise, mingled with a degree of mild consternation. Each looked in wonder up at the bell; each knelt to read the epitaph on the grave; each, in awesome trepidation, withdrew quickly from the scene.

"He who did not come to the bell merely walked around the cabin several times, tried the door, then, after leaving his rifle on the woodpile, went his way.

"Then returned the fourth man, who had passed upcreek fishing, the man I knew as Jim Thorne. This time Thorne heard the bell, and came. I, concealed among the aspens near the grave, watched his approach. When he arrived at the grave, I saw that he had picked up the rifle which one of his companions had left on the woodpile."

"That bears out my story," cried Wanless excitedly. I could almost hear his deep breathing of relief. "You've now got to eliminate me from connection with any suspicious circumstance, haven't you, O'Doul? I claimed to have left the rifle at the cabin and never to have approached the bell. This testimony proves that I told the truth."

"It seems to," admitted O'Doul slowly. "Still, the testimony mentions no name except the name of Jim Thorne. We do not know which of you four lost men was once known as Thorne. We do not know, even, which of you four men laid the rifle on the woodpile. Your rifle, admittedly. But suppose you had lost or abandoned it before coming to the creek, and that later one of your recent companions had picked it up!"

"You're getting rather absurd, aren't you, O'Doul?" challenged Wanless.

Shane read on:

"Thorne arrived at the grave bearing a fly rod, a rifle and with a wicker creel on his shoulder. The bell was tinkling from the aspen bough. It cowed Thorne; frightened him, and finally enraged him. The bell for fifteen years no doubt had been ringing in the depths of his own conscience. Now he saw it with his eyes and heard it with his ears, just as on that day fifteen years ago when he had come upon Jonathan fainted in the bear trap.

"So Thorne stood, first frightened and then enraged, beneath the accusing tinkles of that bell. Finally he knelt and read the inscription on the headstone. When he arose, his rage knew no bounds. His fingers dug into his palms. His face was white, yet streaked red-black with the memory of his own black crime. He cursed, ravingly; he knew that I knew that he had murdered Jonathan Bart.

"And overhead this while the bell still tinkled. Thorne looked up, arms stretched, fingers clawing as though he would choke the bell's tongue from its brass throat. Finally he leaned his rifle and rod against the tree. He hung his creel on the lowest twig of the limb. And what he did was exactly what he had done years before. It was all he did then; it was all he did now.

"He stooped, picked up a pine cone. He ascended to the top of the headstone. Reaching overhead, he *again* muzzled the bell.

"He did exactly that which he had done fifteen years agone. He stuffed a pine cone in the hollow of the bell. Who but Thorne could have been capable of that repetitive action? My last vague doubt as to what had happened years ago now vanished. I knew and I knew that I knew. Jim Thorne was as guilty as though he had plunged a dagger into my brother's heart.

"Emotion mastering my discretion, I, Phineas Bart, stepped out of my hiding and accused Jim Thorne. I did not attack him; I merely pointed a trembling finger and accused him of the murder of Jonathan Bart. He went into a frenzy of funk at my sudden apparition. Possibly he recognized me; I think he did; yet it is conceivable that he thought me to be Jonathan's ghost. Anyway he screeched, piercingly, until the deepest dells of the aspen parks resounded; screeching, staring at me, he stepped backward, stumbled over the grave, arose to his feet, stepped backward another pace of retreat, collided with the tree against which he had leaned the rifle.

"I followed a step, then stood by my brother's gravestone, my forefinger level and pointed unerringly at Jim Thorne. I accused him again of the foulest, most cruel murder ever conceived by fiend or man—accomplished by the mere muzzling of the victim's signal bell of distress.

"And then Thorne, under the spur of his own fright and hatred, snatched up the rifle; he shot me through and through.

"I fell, and my heart's blood dripped upon the headstone of my brother's grave. Thorne, dropping the rifle, fled. I expected to die there, and so scratched upon the stone an appendix to the epitaph: '*The murderer returned today, September 4th, 1924.*'

"But, though the bullet had passed completely through my body, it had entered no vital organ. With some one to find me food and water, I might survive. I have crawled here to my cot. With my strength ebbing fast, I pen this, the last statement of

—PHINEAS BART"

SHANE completed the reading. His delivery, throughout, had been poignantly dramatic and the testimony of Phineas Bart had lost no force or fervor as it had come to us from the lips of Patrick Shane. Folding the paper, Shane now handed it gravely to O'Doul. None of us spoke. We stood tensely solemn for dragging minutes. Over on the cot lay the corpse of Phineas Bart.

And from the virgin forest of aspens came to us incessantly the tinkling of a bell.

Ling-ling! Ting-a-ling!

"God!" cried Breeling, plainly harassed with panic even though he should have been unmoved in the presence of death. His derby hat, never removed, had tipped backward. Suddenly he buried his beetle brow within his palms and sobbed like a child.

Ling-a-ling! Ting-ling! Louder rang the bell, for the breeze had freshened. And then came a gust of mountain wind which brought an almost frantic jingling from the aspens.

"A plague take that infernal bell." And this time the expression of annoyance came almost explosively from Luther Strawn.

Frank O'Doul gave orders that none of the evidence be disturbed, except that the body of Phineas Bart be covered securely with a tarp. This service, coming naturally within his talents, was accomplished under the direction of Breeling. The district attorney then led Buck Weaver aside and held brisk converse with him.

Weaver immediately began making a light pack for a forced march.

"I'm sending Weaver as a courier to Culebra City," O'Doul told the rest of us. "His instructions are to guide the sheriff and the coroner to this spot, bringing along a pack mule. Weaver won't get lost—he's lived too long in the mountains. Reaching our old camp on Fall River, he can follow down to the mouth of the gorge. There, at the first ranch, he can get conveyance to the county seat. In four days he should be back with the sheriff and coroner."

"And the rest of us?" inquired Todd Whelan.

"Will remain here," snapped O'Doul. "I shall stay here myself, to guard the body and the evidence. Whelan, Wanless, Breeling and Strawn will also stay here, until we discover which one of them once went under the name of Jim Thorne."

"Damn you, O'Doul!" exploded Strawn. "Can't you believe me on oath? I swear I didn't come that day to this creek or cabin. The dying man, sick and with confused mind, erred as to the number of visitors. There were three instead of four. That's all. Whelan, Breeling and Wanless admit being here, while I insist I never found the place at all."

"You four will remain, just the same," decreed O'Doul sternly. "I'll file charges against the first of you who attempts to leave without my permission. Quit sniveling, Breeling. And no use getting on your ear, Whelan."

Whelan had been pacing the floor.

"It's an outrage," he snorted. "I—"

"Keep your tongue," cut in O'Doul. "And as for Shane and Valentine, they, not under suspicion, are at liberty to leave now with Weaver if they wish."

"Leave?" cried Shane. "Not in a million years. I'm a frog in my own pond, right now, and all the king's horses and men couldn't drag me away from this mystery."

"And right where he ought to be," I suggested. "Don't forget, O'Doul, that Shane makes his living solving crimes."

It was a hint. O'Doul could hardly evade it.

"All right, Shane," he said. "Nose around if you want to. But every scrap of evidence must be left just as we found it."

"That's always the first rule," agreed Shane. "Never fear, O'Doul. I'll leave all the evidence just as we found it."

Weaver was soon off down the mountain. We estimated that the crow flight distance to our old Fall River camp was only ten miles, and that Weaver, knowing the way now and unimpeded by stragglers, with the grade in his favor, could make it in four or five hours. Resting there, where supplies have been cached, he could proceed on to the ranch country beyond the mouth of the gorge. We all agreed that it would take him about four days to be back with the sheriff and coroner.

The cabin was resigned to the corpse. Borrowing such blankets as we found among the effects of Phineas Bart, our party of seven men made camp on the bank of Lost Creek.

That evening we sat around the fire in moods of mutual suspicion, gloomily, with a restraint unnatural to comrades in camp, soberly watching the round red moon as it climbed the ceiling of our night. The bell tinkled anon, out there in the aspen copse.

I myself was made continually more nervous and distraught by the tinkling of that bell. On the whispering wings of the night it carried incessantly the messages of darksome crime; silvery soft in fact, in effect it became a mournful dirge, brazenly, clamorously mournful over the grave of Jonathan Bart.

We all winced at its ringings, with the single exception of Shane. Shane was the only one of us, that first night, who was reasonably companionable. He assigned himself the pleasantry of taming the Maltese cat. He had coaxed her down from the tree and from a distance had tossed her a fried baby trout.

By bedtime she was purring at his boots.

"If only the cat could talk," I heard him say lightly to O'Doul, "she might point her velvet paw at Jim Thorne."

WE ROLLED in our blankets under the stars, on the brink of Lost Creek. Sleep eluded me, and I think it eluded most of my fellows. The bell seemed to ring louder by night than by day, as the high mountain night wind was more constant and forceful than the breezes of day. I opened my eyes. A cloud had obscured the moon. I could hear the bell ringing off in the aspens.

Ting-a-ling. Ling-ling!

The men about me, I saw, were awake and tossing restlessly.

I heard a voice, Strawn's I believe, mutter—

"Plague take that infernal bell!"

Yet the bell, unmindful of human command, rang on. At a distance in the woods I heard the sudden bark of a wolf. Something streaked by me. It was the Maltese cat. She shinned up the chinked wall of the cabin. I saw her perch high upon the sodded gable, black against the night.

A calm of moments; and then again the wolf howled and the pines whispered. To every sylvan whisper there came a silver echo—the inexorable ringing of a bell.

There was a good deal of general complaint in the morning. Both Whelan and Strawn were angry. They went so far as to threaten suit against O'Doul for detaining them on Lost Creek. Hadn't slept a wink, they said. Not enough blankets, and too much annoyance from the bell. It was not the volume of sound, they admitted, but its damnable suggestion.

After breakfast we all went fishing except Shane and O'Doul. O'Doul sat gauntly vigilant, guarding his corpse and his murder evidence. Shane pottered about, occasionally playing with the cat. He entered the cabin a dozen times during the day and made as many trips to the grave of Jonathan Bart.

"Leave all clues exactly as we found them," O'Doul cautioned him again. And Shane said that he would.

The rest of us took nice catches of natives from the creek. There was nothing else to do.

The second night fell upon our Lost Creek camp, and again our sleep was disturbed by the ringing of the bell. Again in the morning there was common complaint.

O'Doul was firm. We'd stand pat for the sheriff and the coroner, he decreed. He frankly admitted that the bell made him nervous, too, and that it had robbed him of sleep.

"What I'm expecting," he finished suddenly, "is that it will drive the guilty man to flight."

And that gave me an idea why the district attorney was permitting Breeling, Whelan, Wanless and Strawn to wander as far as they wished during the day, fishing. He was practically daring the guilty man to flight.

The second day I half expected one of those four never to return. But they all did, with full creels of native trout. O'Doul hadn't fished. Neither had Shane.

"No good worm holes up here," he explained jokingly.

A third night, with fresher breezes than ever, and again the bell tinkled incessantly. In fact, there was an hour, near midnight in a high wind, when the aspen boughs quaked until I thought they would shake the bell from the tree.

Again on that third morning there was peevish complaint.

"Well, only one more night of this, I hope," sighed Wanless. "Weaver ought to be here tomorrow with the sheriff and the coroner."

The third day passed as had the first and second.

And on that fourth night I slept soundly, from sheer fatigue. I did not once hear the bell ring.

It was Shane's turn to cook breakfast that fourth morning on Lost Creek. We were all awaiting his labors except O'Doul, who had finally decided to take a whirl at the native trout. We saw O'Doul a few hundred yards down the stream, casting his leader on the riffles. He came in just as Shane was ready to serve breakfast.

The gaunt district attorney hung his creel on a bush and sat down by the fire.

"That damn' bell kept me awake all night," he complained, "so at the first crack of dawn I went fishing."

Shane turned so quickly that he spilled all the trout from his frying pan.

"The bell bothered you again last night, did it, O'Doul?" he asked in a strange voice.

"It rode me ragged," snapped O'Doul. "That was darned awkward of you, Shane, spilling those fish. And I'm hungry, too."

"You heard the bell last night, did you?" persisted Shane. His tone was low and seductive.

"What else have any of us heard for the last four days?" rasped O'Doul. "Hurry up and pan some more fish."

"Whelan," asked Shane, turning to the bushy browed ex-cattleman, "did the bell bother you any last night?"

"Oddly it didn't," returned Whelan. "I slept like a log. Didn't hear the bell once."

"Nor I," testified Wanless.

"Nor I," from Strawn.

"I'll swear it didn't ring," piped Breeling, whose derby hat was pretty well bruised and dented by now. He'd been sleeping in it.

"I didn't hear it myself," Shane said slowly, his gaze in command of O'Doul. "Paul Valentine has told me he didn't hear it. In fact, the bell didn't ring last night."

"What's that?" cried O'Doul, turning pale.

He looked past Shane, blinking at the level rays of the morning sun which illumined his lean face.

"It did not ring upon the ears of the innocent," Shane said tensely. "I stuck a pine cone in it last evening just after dark. That was by proper authority, for you told me to leave all clues just as we found them. You will recall that we found the bell with a pine cone in it. I merely restored the cone. And yet the bell rang—not to us but only to you, O'Doul. The only sense which heard the bell last night was the sense of conscious guilt. You, O'Doul, are the man who murdered Phineas Bart. You are Jim Thorne."

For a moment we could have heard a pin drop. Then—

"It's a lie!" shrieked O'Doul furiously.

I thought he would assault Shane. I recalled the text from Phineas Bart's testimony, that Jim Thorne, under dramatic accusation, had displayed the mad frenzy of a demon. Into such a state had now been transformed Frank O'Doul.

There were gasps of amazement from the company, who crowded around. I am sure but for their presence O'Doul would have flown like a wildcat at Shane's throat. He was frothing, crouched, quivering, his cheeks bloodless.

"O'Doul, you are Thorne," again charged Shane.

ONCE more, even in my present mental confusion, I realized that physically it could have been O'Doul. He had not been one of the quartette who had become lost together on the original expedition, yet O'Doul had been gone fourteen hours in search of these missing men. Knowing that they had sought Lost Creek, he would naturally have gone that way. And, being Jim Thorne, an early pioneer of Lost Creek, he would not have become lost. He would have known the most direct route, a route which an athletic man walking swiftly might make in four hours. Yes, physically it could have been O'Doul.

Which would mean that Strawn had told the truth all the while. Strawn was not the fourth man seen by Phineas Bart, but O'Doul. O'Doul, fifteen years ago known to the Barts as Jim Thorne.

"You lie," O'Doul snarled, his teeth bared like a wolf's. It still looked as if he would assault Shane.

"I speak the truth," insisted Shane. "When the point came up, down on Fall River, of the absence of red spots on native trout, you shifted your Lost Creek catch to Strawn's creel. You were with me when I cleaned the trout, and saw me dig out a broken Coachman fly. During the night you realized that the broken sub-leader would be a dead giveaway to your own tackle. So in the dark, while we slept, you attempted to attach your leader to Strawn's tackle. In the dark you erred, affixing the leader to the tackle of Breeling. That did you no harm, for it confused the clues more than ever."

The storm of O'Doul's fury calmed a little. He was thinking, no doubt, that if this was all the evidence Shane had, he was safe.

"Rubbish!" he retorted finally. "That's all theory, unsupported by anything except the wild guesses of an amateurish, tenderfoot detective. I'll stand for no more of your insults, Shane."

"What would you say," asked Shane quietly, "if I asserted that Phineas Bart, in his last testament, described both the person and the actions of Jim Thorne as your own?"

"He described no one," challenged O'Doul. "He merely mentioned a name, Jim Thorne."

"He described a tall fisherman with a wicker creel," argued Shane.

"He did not," snapped O'Doul. "He did not say whether Jim Thorne was tall or short. And every man in our party has a wicker creel."

"But," persisted Shane, "the letter of Phineas Bart said that Thorne, preparatory to stepping up on the gravestone to muzzle the bell, hung his creel on a lower twig of the aspen."

"Well?" barked O'Doul.

"It was your creel which hung on that limb, O'Doul. Your creel with seven native trout in it."

"Prove it," challenged O'Doul, sneeringly.

Shane took from his pocket a small ball of lead.

"This," he said, "is the sinker with which I rigged my bait line when I caught the big trout down on Fall River. I found bait hooks, and this sinker, in your creel, O'Doul. But while I was fishing that afternoon, lolling by the beaver dam, I discovered that it wasn't a sinker after all. It had been made to sink, not in water, but in human flesh. It was a mushroomed .32 rifle bullet. Look!"

Shane went over and took O'Doul's wicker creel from the bush.

"There's a bullet hole in it," he said. "It's not conspicuous because the creel is wicker. The ball simply entered between two strands of the wicker, spreading them a little, but hardly leaving a conspicuous hole. It had already passed through the body of Phineas Bart and his woolen clothing. Passing through wicker, nearly spent, it was stopped by a pile of wet fish. I used it as a sinker on Fall River. It came from Frank O'Doul's creel.

"I hardly suspected O'Doul then. On close examination I suspected that the bullet had been fired in conflict, but it was then inconceivable to me that O'Doul could have committed a crime. All I could do was to insist that we make this second exploration.

"When we read in the testimony of Phineas Bart that Jim Thorne had hung his creel on a limb at the scene of the crime, the presence of the ball in the creel began to have meaning. The creel, from its strap, would hang just about breast high. Phineas Bart, stepping forward accusingly with outstretched finger, came between O'Doul and his creel. Thus the rifle bullet, passing through Bart, lodged in the creel itself. Finally I realized that Bart, in his letter, had described not only O'Doul's actions but his person. He—"

"He did no such thing," shrieked O'Doul.

"He said that Jim Thorne stood on the headstone and, reaching up, stuck a pine cone in the bell. Wanless, Whelan, Breeling and Strawn are from two to three inches shorter than I am," said Shane. "I in turn am an inch shorter than O'Doul. Yet I had to stand on tiptoes to reach the bell from the top of the gravestone. That narrows it to O'Doul and myself. When you consider that fifteen years ago I was a lad attending a New Jersey high school, you must narrow Jim Thorne's identity to O'Doul."

"It's all rubbish," denied O'Doul.

But the fire of his resistance was gone. His head sagged forward. He was haggard, worn by Shane's attack.

We had stood about, confounded and breathless. From the aspens had come no sound of a bell. We knew that it had not rung since dusk last night, by agency of Shane.

Shane now stooped to pet the Maltese cat which came purring against his boot. Then he arose, with a jerk, tensed as stiffly as a ramrod. Evidently he heard the sound which the rest of us, too, heard. It came from the aspens. It was the *tinkle-tinkle-tinkle* of a bell.

It was no fantasy. The bell was actually ringing. From Shane's expression I knew that he was as surprised as I was.

But O'Doul! What about O'Doul when he heard this inexplicable resumption of the bell? O'Doul flinched as if struck by a whip. Then he screamed, as if pursued by every devil in hell. He cracked, for the reason that he heard the bell but didn't believe he heard it. He knew, did O'Doul, that he'd heard the bell last night when it hadn't been ringing at all.

Why should he believe his ears now?

Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! And O'Doul, *thinking that he only thought he heard it,* ran past us like a man gone mad to the log cabin. He entered. He slammed the door. We heard the falling of a bar as he locked himself in with the corpse of Phineas Bart.

Then came a gunshot from within the cabin. I shuddered. Breeling began wailing in hysteria. Shane only stooped to pet the Maltese cat.

Then Buck Weaver came from the aspen copse, ushering the coroner and the high sheriff. They had merely approached from that direction and, having stopped to investigate the bell, their own handling had caused its recent tinkles.

"Didn't we hear a shot?" called out the high sheriff as he came up. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"The most recent trouble," explained Shane, "was the suicide of Jim Thorne, third and last of those three who once lived on Mystery Mountain."

TIGER HUNTING IN BIG TREE FORESTS

By E. A. GUEST

THE SUCCESSFUL hunting of wild animals in dense tree forests is a difficult and dangerous art. It is quite different from hunting big game in long grass twenty feet high, while sitting on an elephant.

In big tree forests there is heavy undergrowth and shrubs, but people can make their way through and see where they are going. There is no long grass to hide the field of vision.

The favorite season of the year for hunting in India is from November to February, in the cold weather. All fur coated animals are then in the pink of condition and have on their winter coats, so that the trophies one gets are worth having.

From the sportsman's point of view one great advantage is that there is heavy dew at night in the cold weather. This dew, which lies thickly on the grass and leaves, cracks the pads of a tiger's feet, so that in going through the jungle the tiger never walks through the grass but along a footpath or on rocks or in the sand of a watercourse.

It is thus very easy to track him from his footprints. The natives in jungle tracks are expert in following game in this way and they can, after examining a footprint, tell how long before the animal passed that way.

One very reasonable question which a novice might ask is—

"How is it possible to locate a tiger in a huge expanse of several square miles of forest?"

The answer is simple.

In his sauntering stride through the

forest the tiger covers twenty miles or more in a night. As his habit of keeping to the pathway is known, the first move in the game is to tie live bullocks—*kills*—at the junction of pathways all over the forest as baits for the tiger.

Ordinarily a tiger on the prowl in search of food has to starve several days. He will never eat carrion or the flesh of any animal not killed by himself. Game animals such as wild pig, deer and stag, which the tiger usually feeds on, are always on the alert against their deadly foe, and instinct warns them of the approach of danger. So it is a trial of wits between the tiger and his victims.

It is easy to understand why a tiger readily seizes and eats a bullock which he finds tied out in the forest. But at the same time he is very suspicious, for no bullock in its senses would take shelter in heavy forest. The tiger may be very hungry, but he does not rush madly in and kill the bullock. He stalks it by standing motionless in one spot, looking and listening. He has a very keen sense of sight and of sound, but he has a very poor sense of smell.

After standing in one position for several minutes, he prowls around and approaches the *kill* from quite another direction and again stands silently watching and listening. This operation is repeated from all points of the compass. After a couple of hours, when the tiger has satisfied himself that there is no danger, he kills the bullock by throwing it and breaking its neck. Then he gets his fangs into its throat and sucks its blood as its life ebbs away.

It might here be urged that the practise of tying out live cattle as baits for tigers and putting them to untold suffering before they are killed is very cruel. It is cruel; but it's a case of being cruel to one bullock in order to be kind to many others. Because after locating the lure the tiger is frequently shot, saving the village cattle on which he preys and freeing the peasantry from their worst enemy.

On the morning after the tiger has killed the bait put out for him, the native sportsmen visit the spot at dawn and cover the carcass with branches of trees to prevent the vultures' seeing it. These birds swoop down in hundreds on a carcass and within an hour the bones are picked dry.

If it is intended to watch over the bullock by moonlight, a sort of seat called a *machan* is erected on a tree close by, and in the afternoon the sportsman takes up his position.

If the tiger has made his kill toward morning and has not eaten much, he will return to it early in the afternoon and the sportsman can get his shot by daylight.

It must, however, be noted that in returning to his kill the tiger is as cautious, or even more so, as he was on the night before. He will stalk the ground around it for an hour or two before going to it. Thus it will be seen how very cautious and quiet the sportsman perched in the tree has to be. The movement of a hand or the rustle caused by moving the arm against the side of the coat will be seen or heard by the tiger, who will gallop off in an instant, never to return.

Also, the fumes of tobacco, unusual in the forest, will be smelled by the tiger and will decide him to leave the spot forever. I think I can attribute my success in big game hunting in large measure to the fact that I am a non-smoker. Also, any high spirits which I may have had were never got out of a bottle. Nor was my courage what is called Dutch courage. Such courage causes foolhardiness.

If the sportsman should be fortunate he will shoot the tiger from the *machan;* but if not, on the following day a *beat*—beating of the forest—has to be arranged. This is where the art of the game comes in.

The local native sportsmen have here to be relied on. They know the jungles and the lay of the land and they know exactly where the tiger is lying during the day, whether in a cave or in dense forest. It is certain that he is not far away from his bullock, to which he will return again and again if the vultures do not devour it.

Knowing that a tiger in a *beat* will always make for the heaviest cover and will not go toward light jungle, the native sportsmen will select a suitable tree on which to erect a *machan*. This is a structure made by tying poles across the branches and fixing a *charpoy*—native cot—on them. The seat can be made very comfortable and the sportsman can turn about in it and face in any direction he pleases. This is very necessary when the tiger comes out charging and has to be given a snap shot.

After the gunner is posted on the *machan*, the two leading native sportsmen select from among their followers about fifty men, on each of whom they can rely to act as *stops*. These *stops* are so important that it can safely be said that the success or failure of the *beat* depends entirely on them.

The arrangement of a *beat* can best be understood by saying that the gunner is posted at the apex of a triangle and the *stops*, who are on trees from twenty to fifty yards apart, form the two sides. The *stops* have strict orders that after the *beat* starts they must clap their hands or strike their tree with a hatchet the moment they hear even a rustling in the jungle and that they must not wait till they see an animal.

After the *stops* are posted the two native sportsmen in charge of the *beat* go to the large body of villagers, numbering two or three hundred or even more, who have been told to wait at a certain point in the forest, and get them to spread out along what might be called the base of the triangle.

When this has been done all the necessary arrangements for a successful *beat* are complete, and all the animals in that section of the forest are hemmed in within the triangle. Now the *beat* is started by a fanfare of tomtoming, yelling, beating of drums large and small and every noise calculated to scare all the animals in that vast expanse of forest out of their wits.

The first impulse of the animals when thus aroused to a sense of danger is to rush madly out of the direction of the sound made by the oncoming beaters, who all the time are converging on the apex of the triangle where they know the gun is.

In doing so the beasts come up against the *stops*, who keep up a fusillade of clapping of the hands or hitting of the hatchets on the trees. Hearing the noise made by the *stops*, the animals now charge to the other side of the triangle, where it might seem to be quiet. But again they are met with a fusillade of clapping, and they are compelled to run in a zigzag course toward the apex of the triangle, where alone quiet reigns and where the gun awaits them—with a warm welcome!

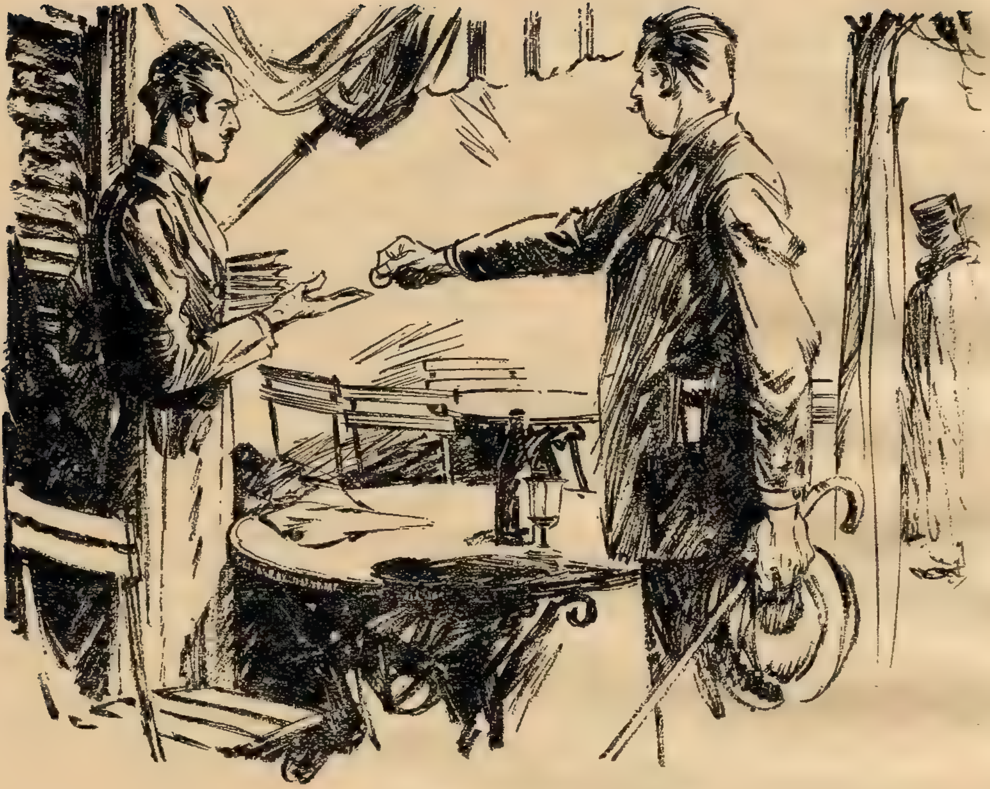
If there is more than one gun the outlet for the driven animals is wider, because each gun is twenty or more yards away from its neighbor according as the jungle is very dense or not. But if the *beat* is properly carried out, and especially if the *stops* do their duty, every animal in the compass of that triangle is brought up to the gun or guns to give an account of himself.

If it is a general *beat* for anything that comes, the sportsman finds himself very busy taking slow or hurried shots in every direction.

But if the *beat* is for a tiger, which is royal sport, then the sportsman has to content himself by letting pass lovely stags with magnificent antlers and other animals which he would like to bag as trophies.

The tiger when beaten out moves very cautiously and is in no hurry to make a dash as deer usually do. He comes out last. He crouches under cover and if forced to go into the open he bounds forward and hides under the cover in front. As a rule, when he does appear before the gunner he gives a very easy shot, because he is either standing or crouching to see where next he can get cover.

I was in one *beat* in which, after the *beat* had stopped and the shooters were getting down the trees, thinking the tiger had not been found, Master Stripes bounded with a terrific roar out of cover around which the beaters were standing talking. One gent took a snap shot at him and did wound him; but he got away.



The GOLD LOUIS

A French Waiter and his German Patron meet on the Field of Battle

By WALTER DURANTY

FOR YEARS before the war Marius had been headwaiter at the little café near the Bourse. Germans used to frequent it in those days, for it provided—and strangely enough still provides—the best brown beer in Paris. At that time I thought Marius was a German himself, for he always talked to the Germans in their own language. I think they thought so too, for they all called him Fritz.

But I was wrong, for after the war Marius came back to the little café again, and in his buttonhole were the ribbons of the French military medal and the war cross with three palms—which are not given to Germans. Also he had a wooden leg, for he had left his own on the Massif of Moronvilliers in Champagne. He walked a bit stiffly, but he was very proud of the fact that it had automatic joints and came all the way from America.

I knew now that Marius was a pure bred Frenchman from Marseilles, whose early life was spent traveling across the world with a big circus. He spoke the principal languages of the globe with a fluency and slang that were cosmopolitan. On quiet afternoons—and afternoons were generally quiet in the little café—I used to sit with Marius at the table in the corner, and he told me in his racy Anglo-American dialect little stories of his adventures in the Great War.

I asked him one day if he had ever met any of his former German clients on the Front. I thought he might not like the question, but Marius was not a man who cared for petty considerations.

"Ah, *ça*, for example, it's queer," he said. "I was thinking of that this morning. Yes, I met one of them; met him face to face and recognized him, but only one. Maybe I have skewered some of the others, perhaps even the short, fat one, you remember, who was so generous with his tips. Or more likely dropped a grenade on some of them and put their light out. But in battle one hasn't time for faces. You'd skewer your own brother and never know it, if he was wearing a German uniform.

"But this case was different. I think you knew him, sir; the big fellow with a scarred face, who used to sit at the oblong table over there and play cards every day after lunch.

"The first day I saw him come in I said to myself, 'Hullo! Here's a swell and no mistake.' You could almost hear the clank of the sword and the rattle of his spurs as he swung along. I'd seen those big guard officers too often in Berlin in the old days not to know the type.

"But I found out that he was only second clerk in the Kandler fur store at the other side of the Bourse. A cheap store at that, and his the cheapest job in it. His name was just Densburg, for all he looked as if he ought to wear a 'von' in front of it, and for a while I thought I'd guessed all wrong for once.

"Then I noticed the men he played cards with, and the way they used to treat him. That opened my eyes, you bet. There was old Jackenheim, the banker, and Von Seidlitz from the Embassy, and a little man whose name I never knew, whom they called sometimes colonel and sometimes Herr Graf. Not the sort of people to play cards with a third rate clerk, by a long chalk.

"But that was about three years before the war and I didn't think much about it. I just allowed that this Densburg had probably been some one smart who'd had to leave the army on account of a scandal or something. It often used to happen, though they didn't generally take jobs in fur stores.

"Well, then came July, 1914, and the panic on the Bourse, which was the first time we got round here to the fact that war was likely. After the 23rd or so I began to notice that our German clients were getting fewer; just fading away, so to speak, without making any song about it.

"But Densburg wasn't that sort. One day after lunch—it was the 26th, if I remember rightly—he turned to me as I gave him his straw hat and said, straight out, 'Here, Fritz, take this. I may not see you again, as I'm leaving tonight,' and slipped a twenty-franc piece, a gold louis, into my hand.

"It was late, and there was no one in the café, so I thought I would try a little stunt to satisfy my curiosity. I saluted in the stiff German way, and said, '*Auf wiedersehen, Herr Kommandant!*'

"He stiffened like a hunting dog when it scents the bird, then flung at me quick and sharp, 'You are going too? You have got your papers?'

" 'Yes, Herr Kommandant,' I said, 'I am going soon.' It was true, for by that time I was sure there would be war.

" 'Where do you join?' he snapped, in the same sharp way.

" 'In France, Herr Kommandant,' I

said, for I thought the farce had gone far enough.

"To my surprise he didn't get me. He just answered impatiently, 'Yes, yes, I know. But where? It must be at Rheims if they've left you as long as this.'

"Then I saw light. I saluted once more, in the French style this time, and you bet your life he knew the difference. And I said in French, 'At Nancy, *mon commandant*. In my regiment of the French army. At Nancy, the French capital of French Lorraine.' And I pulled myself up straight and looked him square in the eyes.

"For a moment he glared at me. Then suddenly he laughed, and replied in French as good as mine:

" 'In that case, *au revoir, Monsieur le Français*. We shall meet sooner than I expected, for unless you are dead or a prisoner you will be bringing my beer again before the end of August. Mark well my words.' And with that he swung out of the café before I could find a reply.

"Well, sir, you remember what happened. At first we went right ahead, we of the armies of Lorraine, the 'Iron Division.' Then we ran into it good and proper at Morhange, the battle of Metz some call it, and began to find out what we were up against. My battalion caught it hot in that action, but they shifted back what was left of us, and reformed us in time for the Marne, which was a different story. We saw the Boches run that time, and we were very glad, I promise you; for they had come very near, very near indeed to Paris."

"YOU don't need to tell me that," I broke in. "I was here myself then, and heard the guns muttering all one night, that Tuesday before the Marne. The people thought it was thunder. But we newspapermen had spent an hour that evening at the War Office—and no very cheerful hour either. And we knew better. I thought Paris was lost."

"So did I," said Marius. "I don't mind telling you I thought of Densburg more than once in those days. I began to ask myself whether he might not be right, that I would soon be serving him beer again in this café in Paris.

"We were depressed then, for a retreat is hard upon the spirit of us Frenchmen. But afterwards, when we had beaten them, I thought of him no more, save to wonder if he had died there in the mud of the Saint Gond marshes, when we flung them back from Paris and the Marne.

"And so the war went on; the Yser, Artois and Champagne, until one icy February day my battalion came to Verdun. Verdun! Ah, that was a battle, a battle of giants! There were no lines or trenches in the frozen slush of those hill tops by the Meuse, and men fought anyhow; hand against hand and teeth against teeth, in a tangle of broken wire, amid the shell holes.

"The first fortnight it was madness. Then we were relieved, and for days we wandered round, hardly speaking to each other, or sane or human any more. At the end of a week they put us back again, with a draft of six hundred men to bring the battalion up to strength, for the enemy's pressure was tremendous, and France needed every man in the firing line.

"They died like flies, those Germans. Our quickfirers cut down their ranks as a man cuts grain with a scythe, and our 75's tore holes in them. But still they came on singing, as if nothing could stop them; in numbers without ceasing, as if they were glad to die.

"They are brave men, those German soldiers. Take it from me, who have fought against them. But even their numbers and their discipline could not withstand the losses we inflicted, and after a time there came a breathing space. Then we began to make little advances on our part; just small patrols raiding out in front of our line, to see what the enemy was up to.

"One night I was out on such a party, creeping from shell hole to shell hole, four of us altogether. I remember we had just crouched flat on account of a German star flare, when suddenly there came a shrieking sound in the air, and a shell burst right on top of us. I was a little to the right of the others, and so I was not killed when they were blown to pieces. But the force of the explosion stunned me and for a long time I lay unconscious. When I came to myself I was aching in every bone, and bitterly cold. Will you believe it, sir, that shell had stripped my coat and shirt clean off me, without even scratching my skin? Only my trousers and undershirt were left. But there wasn't a wound on my body."

"More likely that one of your friends thought you were dead, and took your tunic," I said. "I've heard lots of strange things about shells, but that they undress a man is new to me."

Marius remained quite serious.

"No," he said, "you're wrong. It does happen. I saw a man myself, up in Flanders, stripped plumb naked by a shell. But he was dead."

"Sorry I interrupted," I said. "But I'd never have believed it. What did you do?"

"My head hurt horribly. It was hard to breathe, and I was so dazed that I did not know where I was. I moved my hand feebly, and touched something cold. It was my bayonet, but my rifle was nowhere near. The moon was shining brightly, and I found that I was lying half propped against the side of a shell hole. There I had been sheltered from the wind, and that, probably, had saved me from being frozen.

"I rubbed warmth into my arms and body, and the power of movement gradually came back. I was lifting myself painfully, to take my bearings with the idea of trying to crawl back to the French line, when I heard a tiny click, followed by a gurgle, right close to my head.

"For a moment I paused on my knees. Then, very cautiously, I peered over to the right, in the direction from which the sound came.

"Not a yard away, with his back against the side of a shell hole next to mine, was a man in the greatcoat of a German officer. He was raising a silver flask to his lips, and the moonlight shone bright upon his upturned face. As I hung over him, with my bayonet ready to drive down, I recognized him beyond question. It was Densburg, my client in this very café!

"The surprise, stopped my hand. Our eyes met, and I said, 'We meet again. But this is not Paris, Herr Densburg!'

"In spite of the suddenness of it, the German never batted an eye. Looking straight up at me, he took two or three more swallows of brandy, then answered calmly, 'Colonel Von Densburg, if you please. I prefer to die under my own name.'

"We waited there a long instant, face to face. Try as hard as I could, I couldn't bring myself to drive down my hand. He must have read my feelings in my eyes, for suddenly he said, almost with a flicker of a smile, 'Here, take this. You must be cold. After all, the positions are reversed, for it is I who am giving you to drink.' He held out the brandy flask with the air of one taking it for granted that I would accept.

"He was right. You can not kill a man in cold blood, like that, unless you do it without a second's delay. Once you have hesitated, he is safe."

"Yes," I said, "but why did you hesitate?"

Marius scratched his head.

"Perhaps," I suggested, "because you recognized him."

"No, I don't think it was that, though you may be right. But my idea is that it was all on account of that louis he gave me."

"What louis?" I asked.

"You know," replied Marius impatiently, "I told you he gave me a louis when he went away that last time, just before I played the trick about pretending to be a German reservist."

"Oh, yes," I said. "But what had that to do with it?"

Marius looked puzzled, and did not answer.

"Well, what happened?" I insisted. "Did you take him prisoner?"

He shook his head.

"No," he said simply. "You see, he had a revolver, and once I lowered my bayonet, the advantage was his. Besides, I was dazed, sort of; and half frozen. So I helped him bind up a wound in his leg, and he gave me the flask and his heavy fur vest, and we shook hands and each crawled away toward his own lines. Of course he had his revolver—but I ought to have killed him, just the same, right at the first, without waiting."

Again he paused, frowning, and I felt there was still something unexplained.

"Well, why didn't you?" I asked.

Marius sat up straight.

"I will tell you," he said, "what I believe was the real reason. That louis, you know, that he gave me in the café when he said goodby. I accepted it quite naturally and gladly, as any waiter would. Just a helluva fine tip. But then, later on, when I kidded him about my being in the German army, and he took me seriously, I suddenly knew it wasn't a question of waiter and patron any more, but man to man, Frenchman to German; and then I ought to have given him back his louis, or thrown it on the floor, But, damn it, I needed that twenty francs. So I kept it and did nothing.

"Yes, I think, down in my heart, it must have been the money . . . If I had thrown it back, I could have killed him. But as it was, I was in his debt. I mean—you see . . . Well, I was in his debt, so I had to repay him.

"I think he understood, too," Marius went on thoughtfully, "for it was he, the German officer, who offered me his hand when we parted."

KAVKAZ,
Granddaddy of Polo

By VAL LEWTON

POLO, generally thought to have its earliest origin in Persia, is in reality an offshoot of *kavkaz*, a Caucasian game which antedates polo by several centuries and is still played by the Russian Cossacks.

While polo is the most ancient of all games using a stick and ball, and the parent game only employs the ball in play, the derivation of polo from *kavkaz* can readily be traced. *Kavkaz*, as the older game is now named in honor of its home country, the Caucasus, probably started as a rough and tumble pastime of the Scythian and other Eastern horsemen.

In Asia Minor the head of a sheep is considered to be the greatest of table delicacies. Centuries ago at weddings, feasts and other celebrations a sheep's head would be tossed into the middle of a field and the horseman who could seize it and elude his fellow riders was allowed to keep and roast this tidbit.

From this crude beginning the game of *kavkaz* took form. At first the rider who seized the ram's head would merely gallop off with it in any direction that he chose while all the rest raced after him in the hope of wresting the prize from him. Then two goals were created at either end of a long field and rival villagers or the followers of two different lords would contend together to see which party could first bring the head back to their own goal. The game soon became a favorite among the Caucasian horsemen, who used it to toughen their young men for the more serious game of war.

From the Caucasus this crude form of polo probably was introduced into Persia, where the more effete inhabitants of that country, averse to soiling their hands with the bleeding head of a sheep, used the points of their spears to pick up the prize. From this to the use of a blunt spear, then to a mallet and a ball, was but a few steps. Early drawings and odes indicate that polo was played two centuries before the birth of Christ. They depict and describe the game in such a way that the resemblance to *kavkaz* is evident. The Gilgit version of polo as it is still played among the East Indian natives is another bit in the chain of evidence which establishes polo's paternity as *kavkaz*.

Kavkaz is still the national game in the Caucasus, as well as the favorite Cossack sport. Nowadays it is played on a level field nine hundred feet long and five hundred feet wide, approximately a regulation size polo field. Instead of an open goal a small booth with an opening, measuring three square feet and placed at the height of a horse's withers, is set up at either end of the field. The number of players varies. Among Caucasian civilians the number is usually limited to thirteen men on a side. The Cossacks play *kavkaz* by dividing in half an *eskadron*, numerically equivalent to our infantry platoon. One half plays against the other. A large inflated ball about three times the size of a basketball, encased in a covering of sheepskin with the wool uncut to afford a convenient grip, is used.

The ball is put into play in the center of the field. The object is to drop it into the narrow aperture of the opponents' goal. There are no rules, and the game is rough. Players are allowed to secure the ball while either mounted or afoot. A goalkeeper—usually the player with the broadest shoulders—is stationed at each goal. He blocks the goalhole with his body, and has to be pushed aside before the ball can be dropped in. Kicking, gouging, wrestling and striking with either the ball or the fists is permissible. There are no rest periods. When one or another of the teams has scored three goals the game ends.

No special costume is worn for *kavkaz*. The riders play in full uniform. Cossacks, encumbered by their heavy caftans, with swords at their sides, ride furiously, bending out of the saddle to pick the ball from the ground, fighting in a close knit body of men and horses to seize it from an opponent, or charging at breakneck speed against the goalkeeper. Teamwork has little part in the game. Each man fights to make a goal. Those who are unfortunate enough to fall or be thrown receive no consideration. They are ridden down. Despite this danger many players will dive head foremost from the saddle to throw themselves upon the ball, hoping to remount or pass the ball before they are trampled upon.

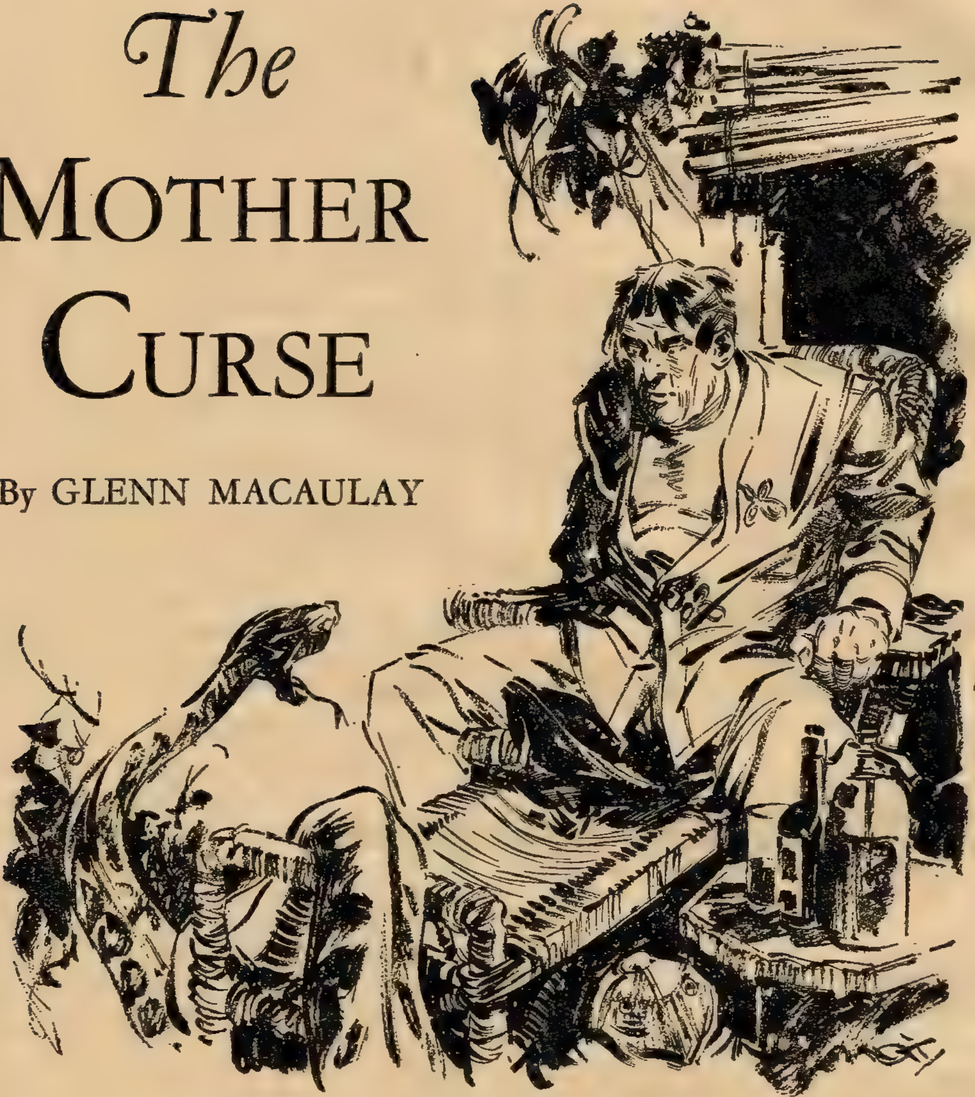
Once a player has secured the ball and broken through the ranks of the other players, he gallops headlong down the field, his fingers entwined in the long wool of the sphere. He beats his horse's flanks with it for more speed. If an opposing player approaches him the ball is used as a weapon. Hit on the head with the big sphere, sledged downward with all the force of a Cossack arm, many a player has tumbled senseless from his saddle.

At the goal a struggle invariably ensues. The Cossack riders do not hesitate to charge the goalkeeper. Both men and horses often go sprawling to the ground from the impact of such a charge. When a goal is scored, both sides form a line again before their own goals. The ball is again put into play in the center of the field.

Strangely enough, the last world's championship series of *kavkaz* matches were won in this country by a team of Terek River Cossacks who defeated their Kuban Cossack opponents by winning thirty-eight of the sixty games played.

The MOTHER CURSE

By GLENN MACAULAY



A Story of the Siamese Jungles

"*TUAN*, all will soon be well. Miwan has put a curse on Kramer *tuan*, and before long he will die."

John Bradford turned in amazement, and stared at his boy, Seng. For a moment he was too taken aback to utter the required rebuke.

"You mustn't talk like that, Seng," he said, then. "Curses are silly talk. They only harm those who utter them."

"That is not so with the mother curse," replied Seng comfortably. "They always come true."

"But why should Miwan want to put a curse on Kramer *tuan?*" inquired Bradford, almost helplessly. He spoke Malay and Seng, although more than half

Chinese, answered in the same tongue.

"*Tuan*, because the *kamudi* that Kramer *tuan* caused to stay about the *kampong* has taken her little Sat, and she is no more."

"Oh, no!" said Bradford sharply.

"Yes, *tuan*, it is so," said Seng with calm conviction.

"But did she—see it?" asked Bradford, with an effort almost.

"No, *tuan*. But the *kamudi* was whistling in the forest close by, because there was no pig for him that night. And all the mothers kept their little ones close. But Sat, when her mother was not looking, ran out. And she did not come back, and the *kamudi* whistled no more."

Seng went on with his task of tucking in round his master's bamboo cot the inevitable and indispensable netting. And Bradford still gazed at him with mingled perplexity and horror.

"Miwan wept all one day," went on Seng, who was evidently still considering the matter himself. "And then she rose up and put a curse on Kramer *tuan*. And so he will surely die."

Bradford smiled—a slightly wry smile—at Seng's calm faith.

"Have you ever seen any one die because of a curse?"

"With a mother curse, I have never seen it otherwise," replied Seng.

Because it is quite useless to argue against calm conviction—especially in a native—Bradford said no more.

But when Seng had gone, and the flickering oil lamp was quenched, and he was stretched on his comfortless cot in the dim heat of his room, Bradford thought the matter over and over. A few inquisitive rays of moonlight, creeping through chinks in the split bamboo walls, danced like fitful ribbons in the gloom. And about him, as the room lapsed into silence, the rustling, busy insect life resumed its ceaseless quest. Lizards darted about the ceiling and in and out of the ventilators, and wood beetles ticked near his head.

Bradford lay in discomfort of mind and body. The anxiety of these last few weeks—the closing weeks of the dry season—was getting on his nerves. The water was low in the wells and pools, and malaria, fever and cholera went stalking through the jungle villages. One never knew, now, who would be the next to go. And then there was Kramer. Bradford impatiently reflected that the life of a mining engineer and commercial geologist in the Siamese jungles was hard enough without being caged up with a man like him.

Kramer was Bradford's senior and superior in that little outpost of the Siamese Mining and Trading Co, so Bradford labored to live at peace with him. But it was hard work. And lately it had been occurring to Bradford quite frequently that the jungle was certainly "getting" Kramer. He had always been domineering and more or less brutal, but of late he had been altogether past a mark. Forgetting that the white man in the jungle is always practically at the mercy of the jungle dwellers, he rode roughshod over their rights and their feelings as if he were a god in a car. Often, Bradford knew, the villagers were resentful, and murmured among themselves at the things he did. And now this hideous snake business.

Bradford himself had loathed it at the time—and after; and had been helplessly furious. But that was all the good it had done. In fact, of late he had suspected that to show displeasure was one sure way of making Kramer doubly contrary and outrageous.

Late one afternoon they had been sitting together on the veranda, drinking their pegs, when out of the wall of jungle a little to one side of the clearing, squealing with all its might, had burst a small wild pig. It was followed by one of the largest pythons Bradford had ever seen, and he had seen many of the big grass reptiles. In billowing folds of greenish brown and gold, oblivious of the house and the men on the open veranda, intent only on its shrieking prey, the great snake swept across the clearing. Almost in front of the amazed men it struck the pig a blow with its head that sent it spinning over. Bradford recovered from his surprise, and jumped up.

"Oh, let's shoot the brute!"

But Kramer shot him a glance out of narrowed, cold blue eyes.

"No. Let it alone. We'll see the fun."

Not proposing to witness what was about to follow, Bradford beat a hasty retreat into the house. A few coughing squeaks, and then silence. Bradford thought that perhaps Kramer would then send for his gun and shoot what would now be an easier mark. But he made no such move, and presently Bradford went out again. He glanced round the clearing. Nothing was to be seen. By his chair stood Seng, his eyes on the veranda floor. Behind Kramer's chair was N'Pai, his boy, also with veiled and downcast eyes.

"Did you shoot the thing?" inquired Bradford, who knew, of course, that he had not.

"No," replied Kramer, who also knew what the question was meant to imply. "What d'you want to shoot it for?"

"Not very nice things to have around one's dwelling," said Bradford, trying to hide his disgust and look indifferent.

"They don't bother human beings," rejoined Kramer coolly, taking up his brandy peg—his second at that sitting.

"Yes, they do occasionally," said Bradford. "But they're particularly dangerous round a village on account of the children and stock."

Kramer turned his glass round in his fingers and watched the light fall on the pale amber of its contents. His action was deliberate, and his eyes flashed one swift, almost insolent glance at his partner in exile.

"Well, we're not in the business of clearing the jungle for the villagers."

Bradford said no more. He took up his glass of weak brandy and water and looked at it critically.

"Seng, you boiled the water?"

Seng looked up quietly.

"Yes, *tuan;* I boil."

Bradford drank his peg slowly, and looked away across the enclosing tree tops. He did not wish his face to register his displeasure too plainly, if only for its effect on Kramer. He tried to think of something commonplace to say by way of reopening conversation. But, for the life of him he could not, just then. And so silence reigned, which was only broken presently by Kramer's commands to his boy.

TWO DAYS later, coming up from the little village accompanied by Seng, who was not satisfied unless shadowing his *tuan* about, as he entered the clearing round their house Bradford saw a strange sight. Seated on the veranda was Kramer, and before him in the middle of the clearing, tied to a planted stake and running round in squealing circles, was a small pig. Bradford stood and stared.

For a moment or so, glass in hand and reclining comfortably in his chair, Kramer looked coolly across at his partner. Then he drank the contents of the glass, set it down and called out:

"How long are you going to stand there? Come on up. You'll spoil the show."

Bradford crossed the clearing somewhat slowly.

"What's it supposed to be?" he inquired, as he stepped on to the low veranda.

"Just going to see if his snakeship knows enough to remember a good spot," explained Kramer calmly. "You know, Lemoyne had one of these fellows that came regularly for his meals."

Bradford nodded. He had heard of Lemoyne. In spite of himself his lips went into a tighter line.

"Yes," he agreed. And then, endeavoring to be casual, "Lemoyne was an opium fiend, you know."

"Oh, so they said."

"Well, we know how he died," said Bradford.

He hesitated a moment. His impulse was to go straight into the house. But that would probably annoy Kramer and set him to concocting fresh pranks. And as it was extremely improbable that the snake was now anywhere in the vicinity, it would be foolish to store up trouble for nothing. So, telling Seng to get him some lemon water, he sat down without further comment.

The clearing was at the end of the one street of the *kampong*, or village. Attracted by the squealing of the pig, the occupants came up singly and in pairs to look. They did not form into groups, or stay to discuss matters, for they knew full well that Kramer would order them off. But they looked and passed on to discuss things fully among themselves, as Bradford knew.

Paying as little attention as possible to the pig, which, with the noisy perversity of its kind, kept up a ceaseless, protesting round, Bradford turned slightly sidewise and looked with troubled, tired eyes into one of the dark, tunnel-like paths leading into the jungle opposite him. He felt an intense longing to get away from the whole distasteful mess just then called living—Kramer and his moods, malaria, water shortage, monotony and boredom. If only—

"By God!" said Kramer, near his elbow. "Will you look at that?"

Turning sharply and following Kramer's glance, Bradford saw, within the jungle wall opposite, outlined by the light of the lowering sun behind, something that stood almost as tall as a man—something that swayed and swayed. A moment and then this swaying something dropped to the ground, and forth into the clearing rolled the great snake.

Bradford stared at it for a moment, and then jumped up and went into the house. Lying on his back on the bamboo cot in his room, he stayed until summoned to the evening meal by Seng's gentle announcement—

"*Tuan, makan.*"

Whether to annoy Bradford, or whether to satisfy the lust of cruelty, is hard to say; but every other day thereafter Kramer had something staked out for the snake to catch. Also he insisted on discussing his sport. And this, of course, was pure perversity, for well he knew that Bradford loathed the whole thing.

"You know, the beggar actually swallowed the whole thing, hook, line and sinker," he announced one evening as he and Bradford sat at dinner. "Trouble is, pigs are so expressionless. I'd like something that I could watch as the snake appears. To see what they—you know; what do they call it in the movies?—register; how they register."

"H'm. Well, you might try staking out a man. Or a child," suggested Bradford sarcastically.

"Yes," agreed Kramer, not choosing to recognize the sarcasm. "Could buy a girl baby cheaply enough, no doubt. But they haven't got much more expression than pigs."

Again Bradford refused to rise to bait, and took refuge in silence. And that was all of the matter for the time being. But his partner's morbid and perverted nature and actions worried him, and added to the fret and weight of life that lately seemed to be pressing on him. Especially this last escapade, as he knew the villagers resented being forced to tolerate the snake's continued presence near them.

In fact, Nai Look, the headman, approached him on the subject. He set forth to Bradford the dangers of so unpleasant a neighbor.

"It should be killed, *tuan*," he concluded respectfully.

Bradford hedged. Because, according to the white man's ethics, when dealing with the brown man there must be no question about upholding another white man, right or wrong.

"The *tuan* Kramer has not thought of it thus," he said quietly. "I will talk with him about it."

Nai Look bowed his head. He was not at all fooled by the *tuan's* talk. The difference between the two men was known to all the villagers, and appraised with surprising accuracy. Bradford was a man born with an incurable liking for his fellow men. In spite of all Kramer could do to uproot so debasing and absurd an idea, he would insist on considering the jungle inhabitants as people. He understood and sympathized with the naïve and childlike lives of these happy-go-lucky folk, and in return they understood and liked him. And this, their evident liking for him, was one of the few pleasures of Bradford's present existence. A pleasure, however, that in self-defense he strove to keep a secret. But when waving hands and friendly calls greeted him from the thatched houses, he was warmed at heart. And when a little child ran up with the joyous abandon of childhood and clasped him round the legs, he would bend and pinch and pat the soft, round brown arms, and hunt assiduously in his pockets for lumps of sugar he carried for just that purpose. He could not have helped doing that if he had tried.

AND SO, because in a way he considered the villagers his charges, Bradford was worried about Kramer's obstinacy in the matter of the great snake. Surely death stalked these defenseless people in too many guises as it was, without deliberately and wilfully adding another. Therefore, the next time Kramer was superintending the staking out of his pet's meal and devising new methods of prolonging the performance, Bradford ventured to speak to him in protest as amiably as possible.

"You know, Herbert—I—we really ought not to do this. I'm afraid it's going to get us into trouble sooner or later. The villagers are murmuring about it, and—"

Kramer straightened up and his fat, blond face set in heavy, square lines.

"Well, let 'em murmur."

"Oh, yes. But we don't want them down on us. We want to be supplied with coolies when we need them."

"We'll have all the coolies we want," Kramer retorted ominously. "Nai Look will see that his village supplies us, or I'll know the reason why."

"Yes—but it really is dangerous," insisted Bradford. "When you get tired of—of this performance, what's going to happen? The thing will still be hanging about, and it'll very likely attack the village stock, or the children."

"Well, what's one dirty brat more or less? No, not that way, you idiot—" to the boy who was driving in the stake. "Drive it on a slant—so."

Bradford gave up once more and lapsed into silence. He sighed quietly. Somehow he felt oppressed, helpless beneath a sense of weight—the weight of a selfish and evil personality, or of impending disaster. He could not tell which.

And then dysentery began to break out in the village and surrounding territory. Seng would come with an account of this one or that who had been taken with a "belly pain," and Bradford would send peppermint syrup and what simple remedies he could. Kramer, too, got a touch of malarial fever and lost interest in current events, including the snake, for the time being. And Bradford was just turning over in his mind how he could quietly manage to get the thing killed, when Seng came to him with the news of the loss of little Sat—little round, laughing, roguish Sat.

And so now Bradford lay on his cot and broke into perspirations of horror and helpless rage. Now and again he heard Kramer, his temper rendered more outrageous by the slow fever that was worrying him, bawling to his boy. And then later to the *dschaga*—the night watchman.

Bradford did not feel any too well himself. No one did just then. Sometimes he began to feel as if he simply could not stand things much longer. His face grew peaked, and his eyes held a look of weariness that was both mental and physical. Seng, who noted every phase of his *tuan's* daily appearance, offered soft consolation and advice.

"*Tuan*, can we not go into the forest to look for a mine? I know a place where the wind comes through the mountains from the sea. It is a cool wind and will make us strong again."

Bradford smiled.

"That would be nice, Seng. But we have to wait till the Big House sends us a chit to go."

Seng nodded apprehension and decided that he would that very night offer up a gift and prayer to his god for a chit to arrive.

Whether he did or not is not history. But in any case, a day or two later a message did arrive from Moulmain. A Chinese, on a mountainside, had brought in a small sample of ore and a large and glowing description of the place. So headquarters sent instructions to their outpost to look the matter up.

The message was delivered to Kramer, and he scowled as he read it. After giving names, and as many particulars as possible, as to the probable whereabouts of the claim the note concluded, "Better send Bradford." And this was what Kramer scowled at. It indicated that the firm was taking note of the fact that Bradford always managed to find what he went after. Kramer did not and, as he had explained to headquarters on his last visit, this fact was attributable to two factors. The certain amount of luck inherent in such ventures and, more particularly, the fact that Bradford was so pampering and spoiling the natives of the region that no decent white man could any longer handle them.

Evidently the Siamese Trading Company was not at present disposed to cavil at the means, provided the result was right. But Kramer decided on his next visit to put it plainly to them that Bradford must be given instructions to mend his ways, or he, Kramer, would no longer work with him. Kramer felt that this was really a matter of life and death to him; for twice lately he had been deserted by his boys and coolies in the midst of a trackless jungle, once nearly losing his life in consequence.

Yes, this was a matter that should be settled once for all when he next went to Moulmain. In the meantime, he read the letter again, and scowled. Not that he wanted to make the expedition himself. He detested jungle expeditions and would have sent Bradford in any case. But he did not at all care to be told to do that. That was an entirely different matter.

When Bradford came in from the village, he told him in his own way of the expedition at hand.

"You'll have to go," he said authoritatively. "You can manage it all right. I'm not in any condition to go anywhere myself just now till I get this beastly fever out of me."

"No—" Bradford looked gravely at the man before him, at the greenish yellow look round his eyes, and round and behind his ears; at the glassy brightness of his eyes—"no, you're not. You know, Herbert, I believe you'd pull round quicker if you'd stick to boiled water and lemon, and cut out most of the brandy for the time being. I find I get along better that way."

"Oh, I'm not taking much brandy. Got to have something to keep me going. Appetite isn't up to snuff at present."

As was his habit, Bradford said no more. He went on with the expedition subject.

"Better start at once, I suppose. Where did you say it was—on the Namket?"

Kramer read the company's particulars, and Bradford jotted them down, word for word. He noted with amusement that Kramer would not do him the courtesy of handing him the letter. Then Kramer went on to give explicit instructions as to just what supplies should be taken, how many coolies, and so forth. To all of which Bradford listened decorously, though he intended to do exactly as he thought best in all of these matters, inasmuch he was to be responsible for the outcome of the expedition.

When Seng heard the good news he could have danced for joy, had that been his way.

"*Tuan*, the gods have sent release. I must go and tell Moi." Moi was Bradford's cookie. "Do we go north, or do we go south?"

"We go north," replied Bradford. And then he went on to give the somewhat sketchy whereabouts of the goal ahead.

"Where the Namket runs round the foot of a mountain."

This had always been Bradford's system. It had been tried and found successful. He always took his boys into his plans—as was indicated by Seng's use of the word "we." Not the coolies. They did not care where they went, just so they were fed and paid. But his two boys always pulled as hard for the success of the undertaking as he did; and were able, as he was always willing to admit, really to do more toward the attainment of it. Impressed with the necessity for secrecy on account of possible rivals, they went into the villages and talked and visited, and could find out from an evening's chatter more about the location of a spot and more about the true and inward facts surrounding it and the claims made for it, than headquarters could ever supply.

This was why Bradford always succeeded, where others could not. And also with much less work and worry. For instance, he could safely leave the matter of gathering food supplies and kitchen equipment to Moi. And to Seng the choice of coolies. That left him only the gathering of the necessary small medical supplies, instruments, writing materials and such scant personal effects as must be taken.

On the morning of the third day the expedition struck off into the jungle. And never in all his life was Bradford so glad to enter its heated, checkered depths as he was this time. Dangers and hardships always lurked in the jungle; but it seemed to Bradford they were clean dangers and man sized hardships. Not the evil shapes that had lately haunted life in the house in the Mien Tung clearing.

Seng insisted that the cool place in the mountains of which he knew was not much, if any, out of their way on the road to the Namket, and that the *tuan*—and indeed all—would be the better for a day there. And Bradford let him have his way.

And when they arrived there, and Bradford breathed the cool, invigorating air, and recognized from the configuration of the mountain chain before them that it was indeed a draw for a coast current, he admitted Seng's wisdom, and was glad they had come. From there they would all start in fine shape for the troublesome journey to the Namket.

Seng and Moi selected a camp spot near a great *chang* tree. This was a wise move, for the people of the surrounding villages would come there for the resin, and friendships could be established. And when the spot had been selected, and with a rush his camp stool and dispatch box had been placed in readiness under a tree, Bradford answered Seng's cheery call to him to come and be seated.

"*Dudu, tuan. Dudu.*"

He sat down in relief and comfort while the tireless Seng and Moi set about the rapid preparation of the evening meal. A short distance away the coolies made their fire. Some of them cooked, and some lay about; but all seemed happy and carefree. Seng and Moi bustled back and forth in busy contentment from the wicker kitchen basket to the fire; and jests and snatches of song filled the air.

And Bradford felt the load of care and gloom of the last few weeks slip away. Surely men made their own heaven or hell.

IN THE meantime, in the house in the Mien Tung clearing, Kramer was also experiencing a kind of relief—a relief from restraint. For Bradford's presence was a sort of restraint on his actions, even though a restraint that he constantly defied.

Of course, Kramer was a sick man and, whether he knew it or not, was daily growing sicker; and that hampered his style. But he would show these villagers a thing or two while he had them to himself. They had got so that they did not know how to treat a white man. And so he let himself go as far as he was able, and as long as he was able. He gave way to perfect orgies of roaring tempers; kept his boys on the run day and night and, when in desperation they went home, took it out on the night watchman. He sent for native women and when they were brought him, their protesting cries proclaimed the treatment given them. They would come no more. And the boys would stay around him for only just so long, and he sat and promised himself what he would do to them when he was himself again.

About a week of this, and Kramer had to keep to his couch. Still, he exultantly reflected, the boys were already more submissive and catered to him far more now that that fool, Bradford, was gone. Of their own free will they brought a pig and staked it out for his pet's meal; and carried him out to see the delectable sight of the capture. They kept him plentifully supplied with water, and he had no way of knowing that it was no longer boiled. Also they brought him many and various dishes, although by now he could not eat much, and what he did eat he would much better have let alone.

The house began to be neglected. Flies settled on neglected food; on everything. Kramer tried to roar out his commands, but his voice had lost its power, and the boys would not come near enough to be cuffed or knocked about. The pain and ache in his body, the fever that consumed him, added to helpless rage, made him so desperately miserable that at last he called for a pipe and pill. That would quiet his nerves, he told himself. It was promptly brought, and thereafter a smoking outfit was kept constantly near him.

And then one night the watchman did not come at all. Except for the lizards and the beetles the house was silent and motionless. Kramer lay and dozed, but his mind was ill at ease.

Dawn came, brilliant and streaming, and morning broadened. Later than usual the boys came chattering across the clearing. Two of them came to attend to Kramer. They never came singly now. He glared at them, but his voice came weakly.

"Where *dschaga* last night?" he asked.

"*Tuan*, he sick."

He said no more. But he turned his head away from the meal they offered him in enraged disgust. Lemon water? No! Blandy? Er—yes . . .

He drank the brandy, which seemed to burn strangely in his discontented body. Then it put his body to sleep, but his mind remained fretful, restless. The boys scuffled about, doing the house chores after a fashion; and then they went out again, back to the village. They were neglecting their duties, and Kramer knew it. When he got well, or Bradford got back, they should see what would happen to them.

The boys came back for tiffin. He would have liked to scold them, but was too tired. They offered him a meal too hearty and solid for even a well man in the heat of the day, and he refused it with a twitch of angry lips.

"Blandy, *tuan?*"

"Yes!"

That afternoon he waked up suddenly. He was tired of lying in that stuffy room. It came to him that if he would live it must be by his own efforts—efforts that must be made at once. He must get out on to the veranda, into the open, into the air. He rolled suddenly off the cot, fighting and tearing at the netting that wrapped him round. Slowly, bit by bit, with rests between every few feet, he dragged himself out on to the wide veranda, out to the edge of it. And there pride stung him to further effort. Ill as he was, he hated to have the despised villagers see him on the ground. Hated to be helped up. So, somehow, he got himself up into a chair. He forgot how long he had been sitting in the chair. His body sagged uncomfortably in it. He opened his eyes and looked across the clearing. It seemed to him it looked glaring, sinister. A panic of helplessness, of misery of mind that was near to terror grew up in him. Something was wrong, dreadfully wrong, with him. Could it be that he was going to die? No! He wanted to live; he *would* live.

The will to live that was rising in him warred with an exhausted body. He sat with closed eyes, and in his mind a world was created—a world peopled with running shapes, and long streets in which people hid from him, and wearisome clearings where he could not hide from the sun.

Some kind of a sound in front of him, some sense of presence made him open his eyes. And then the fever left him, and ice ran down all his veins and froze his body. Something swayed before him—a head with horrible, ragged, slavering lips, and dreadful, brilliant, unfeeling eyes that looked into his.

He stared into those eyes and lost count of time. All life faded away, and there was nothing but him and that horror before him.

Somehow, somewhere in the back of his mind, as it were, he saw the pig, running round and round the stake. The last extreme of human fear and despair and desolation was upon him. His heart beat slowly in his throat, though his body was already cold and dead.

And then his body sagged, and he would have fallen on his face. But at the first awaited movement, iron bands were around him and upheld him; and in the first constriction of that dreadful coil life was mercifully crushed out of him.

A FEMALE ROBINSON CRUSOE

By ARTHUR WOODWARD

ALEXANDER SELKIRK had his DeFoe who made much over the short sojourn of the Scotsman on Juan Fernandez Island, but in reality Selkirk was but a transient Crusoe compared to the Indian woman who was abandoned, alone, on the bleak island of San Nicolas off the Southern California coast, for eighteen years.

About 1810 or 1811 Russian fur hunters cruised into the Southern California waters seeking new hunting grounds. The greatly prized sea otter then existed in great numbers in the foam churned seas that lashed the Santa Barbara Channel Islands. Thither the Russians and their imported Aleutian Island hunters repaired, and slaughtered not only the fur bearing animals but the human inhabitants as well.

The tiny, fog bound island of San Nicolas, or Ghalas-at, as it was termed in the Chumash language, was the spot the savage northern raiders visited more often than any other. The numerous clashes took rapid toll of the simple islanders who were left after the mission padres had drafted numbers of them to work in the mainland missions at Santa Barbara, Ventura, Fernando and San Gabriel.

By 1835 the San Nicoleños were reduced to but a handful, and the mission authorities, seeking to save the lives of these pitiful few, sent a boat to the island to bring the remnant of the tribe off from their isolated homeland.

Now, it so happens that good landing places are few and far between on almost any of the Channel Islands and San Nicolas is one of the worst of the lot. Consequently the rescuers, working in a heavy sea, were under a severe handicap. However, in spite of the difficulties, they managed to get the last boatload on board when suddenly a woman screamed.

To the horror of the onlookers one of the islanders, a young matron, screamed fearfully and plunged overboard into the seething tide race and swam back to shore. It developed that in the confusion attending the packing and moving, the woman in question had forgotten her few months old baby, leaving it asleep in her rude hut.

Night was racing down from the mountains of the mainland, and the captain of the ship did not dare launch a small boat in such uncertain waters. So he put in for shore, leaving the woman and her child alone upon the island, intending to return within the week. The next day a terrific storm arose, and for many days it was impossible to get near the island.

The days mounted into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years. The woman was practically forgotten. It was argued that she was probably dead anyhow, and what was one Indian more or less?

The years drifted by and the Americans arrived to take over California. The newcomers hunted for sea otter and other marine animals in the channel waters. Gradually a story spread that San Nicolas was haunted. Hunters putting into the island for water spoke of seeing the wraithlike figure of a woman high up on the rocky headlands or running ghostlike along the beach in the moonlight. Then some one recalled the story of the lost woman.

Nearly eighteen years had passed since the San Nicoleños had been removed and scattered among the missions. In that time the missions themselves had suffered reverses and were rapidly becoming historical landmarks. Surely the woman could not be alive. It must be her ghost the hunters had seen.

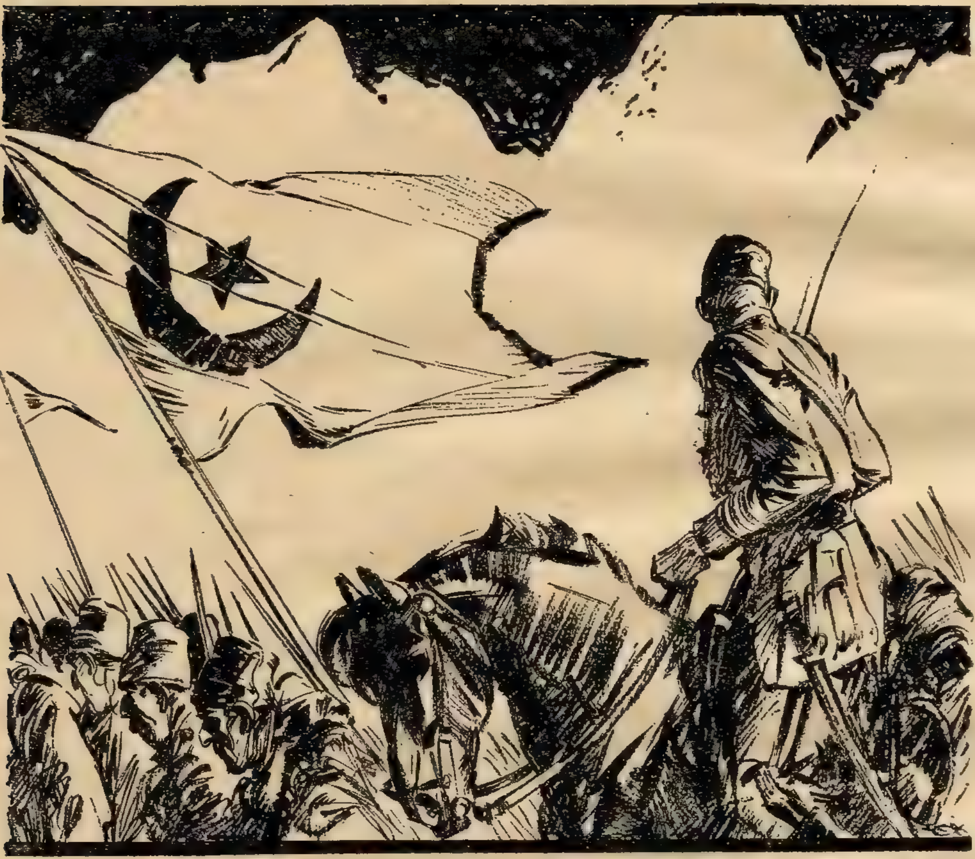
But there were a few hard heads who did not believe in ghosts. These men, residents of Santa Barbara, chartered a small vessel and put out to the island, intending to search it thoroughly. Within a few days they were rewarded with the sight of slender, naked footprints on a patch of sandy beach, tangible evidence that the Indian castaway was alive after eighteen years isolation.

Then one day they found her, crouched in her rude hut of whale ribs covered with rush matting, surrounded by her primitive tools and utensils of basketry and steatite. At first she was greatly terrified, but soon overcame her fear, and when the men told her, as best they might, in a rude sort of sign language that they had come to release her from her island bondage, the poor creature became quite animated.

She chattered excitedly, trying to tell them of her experiences, and by dint of signs she made them understand that her baby had died shortly after her abandonment. She had existed during the remainder of the years as her people had done before her, catching fish, killing birds and seals, making garments of their skins and tools of their bones. She took with her her robe of bird skins neatly sewed together with sinew, a patched basket or two, some bone awls and other primitive trinkets.

Upon the return of the boat to Santa Barbara with the female Robinson Crusoe every one tried to make the bewildered woman comfortable, but whether it was homesickness, age, or change of diet, in spite of all they could do for her she wasted away and died within a month or so after her release from exile. Some of her effects went to Rome, and the last traceable piece of her belongings perished in the San Francisco fire in 1906.

A KNIGHT OF THE CRESCENT



The Further Adventures of a Famous Soldier-of-Fortune

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

"*MERHABA, Beym; otus saat dir, Beym,*" said my orderly, Tasim Chavush, as he stood at attention in front of my field bed, his knotty right hand raised to the rim of his *enveryi*, while his left offered a tiny cup of Turkish coffee on a silver tray. "Good morning, my Bey; it is six o'clock, my Bey."

And once more I would awake, gulp down the coffee and fall back on my pillow to doze a few minutes longer. Every morning I was surprised again that Tasim was there, that he was a Turkish soldier and my orderly, that I was a superior officer in the Sultan's army, and that I was snowed in in the little provincial town of Erzyndian, in the heart of

Asia Minor, in fact on the foothills of the wild Caucasus range.

How it had all happened was still bewildering to me. The war had broken out, the universally expected great war, the war that was going to give my military spirit its first great chance. I had started immediately to join the Latin nations, to fight for my race, my civilization, for the wide and deep Latin brotherhood—and here I was, accepting my morning coffee from Tasim, commanding dark Oriental forces under a flag with a crescent. It was only to be explained in one way: that, barring my duty to my own country, Venezuela, I felt no other call upon me as strong as the call to adventurous action. And adventure for me, at that crucial moment in world history, had come under a half moon blazoning the glamourous marches of Europe and Asia.

How had it all happened?

Only a few months previously I was in the small island of Curaçao, Dutch West Indies, not far from the coast of Venezuela. I had landed there after the failure of General Moncho Rodriguez to carry out his end of our mutual revolutionary plans against the Gomez dictatorship had compelled me to abandon that attempt after two months of steady progress along the western states of the republic.

What was I doing in Curaçao? I was watching the strong sunlight of the Caribbean Sea as it mellowed the many colored, quaint little Dutch houses of Willemstad, the capital town, taking long drives along the outlying fields, talking to my friends at the Club de Gezelligheid overlooking the emerald green waters of the bay.

When I told my friends at the club that I would soon be sailing and evaded answering their questions as to my destination—a thing I always avoid—most of them, Venezuelan revolutionists, probably thought that I was leaving for the island of Trinidad, B.W.I, to get in touch with General Rodriguez. But my friends were not the only persons interested in my plans. Gomez had his intelligence men working overtime to secure authentic information as to where I might be expected to turn up next.

If the boat I took touched the Venezuelan port of La Guaira, I would be sure of an unpleasant surprise engineered by Gomez's henchmen, who would not hesitate to arrest me on board an American vessel even, knowing that their chief would back them up and extricate them from whatever predicament they might get into. Gomez had, and still has, the idea that I am the master mind, the "man behind the gun," in all Venezuelan revolutionary activity.

Foreseeing all this, of course, I embarked secretly on the Dutch schooner *Tres Hermanas,* which left the port before dawn one day. I simply got up from the table of a café where I was presumably carousing, stepped to the waterfront for a breath of air, casually jumped over the rail of the *Tres Hermanas* and was on my way. The captain was my friend and a man who never talked for pleasure.

Several days of battling about in the churning waters of the Caribbean brought us one morning alongside a mountain that arose almost perpendicularly out of the sea. It had the shape of a sugar loaf, and the skipper informed me that it was the island of Saba, situated about one hundred miles southeast of Porto Rico. The island, which belongs to the Dutch, was formerly a volcano, and though it had been apparently extinct for many years, the people who lived in its crater were in constant danger of waking up high among the clouds only to go to sleep immediately in the arms of their Maker.

As soon as the schooner had dropped anchor alongside the island, the governor and his wife, a fat negro wench carrying a pet parrot and a pet monkey with her, had themselves windlassed from the edge of the cliff into one of our dories, and came aboard for a friendly visit. The governor had a preference for ginger cocktails, and the skipper gave him all he and his lady wanted. The governor was an old, fat, jovial Dutchman, who was also justice of the peace, police department, town physician, revenue collector, prison warden and, as he claimed, a privy counsellor to her Majesty, Queen Wilhelmina.

After drinking several cocktails, which seemed an important task to him—and to his lady—he said that, by the way, had we heard the news? No? Why, war had broken out in Europe. Yes, it seemed that the whole world was in it. War had been declared between France and Germany, the Russians had invaded East Prussia, the British were sending troops across the Channel.

Hallelujah! Here was the chance of my life. The long expected world war had broken out at last. My motto has always been "When you see a good war, go to it!" and I thanked my stars that I had not been born too late or too soon to go to this one. I was thirty-four, just the right age, and my training and experience as a fighter would give me my chance, my big chance. Miranda, the Venezuelan liberator, was a general in the armies of France during the Revolution. I would be merely following an honored tradition of my country by offering my sword to a foreign country without renouncing my citizenship. I made up my mind at once that I would go to Belgium, or to the Belgians, for Belgium seemed to have been overrun by the German armies, and offer my services to their cause, if for no other reason than that Leopold II had befriended me as a boy.

IN PURSUIT of this swiftly formulated plan, I took passage in Saba aboard a rickety schooner for St. Kitts, and from there, on another excuse for a schooner, for Trinidad, B.W.I, where I arrived a few days later. Several German cruisers were reported active on the Caribbean, sinking all Allied shipping they chanced upon. Navigation was, therefore, practically at a standstill. Realizing that there would be no opportunity for sailing for Europe from a British island, I chartered a fishing smack to take me to Barbados, where a Dutch steamer was expected in those days *en route* to Rotterdam. But when I reached Barbados, the steamer had just weighed anchor and taken to the high seas. This was hard luck, and perhaps only a die-hard like myself would have persisted in bucking it. When one door closes, I have frequently found, two others open with a bang. And this, in my actual case, proved true the very next morning.

I was pacing up and down the wharf nervously, trying to think of a way of getting to the war, when an enterprising looking chap approached me and introduced himself to me as a revolutionist, giving me the necessary proofs. He offered to take me to the island of Granada, north of Barbados and northeast of Trinidad, where a friend of his would give me a lift as far as Santa Lucia, farther north still, and south of Martinique. The plan was not very clear, but any progress north and east, anything that would get me nearer Europe, was acceptable to me at that moment.

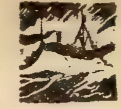
Two days later I was aboard a one masted covered boat, sailing from the harbor of Granada for Santa Lucia—with a cargo of ice! Two days, we expected, would put the ice into the highballs of the Santa Lucians. But the wind and the sea decreed otherwise, and it was ten days before we got there, after a terrific battle with the wind, the sea and the ice. Bad weather set in almost as soon as we had crossed the bar. The dark green waters of the Gulf Stream kept buffeting our frail craft, playing with it as if it were a nutshell. This crazy swirl continued for two days, at the end of which we woke up in the center of a glassy pool of blue water enclosed in the horizon. The sun burned us to our ribs; not a flight of breeze could be detected on the sails or on the surface of the sea. The schooner remained motionless as if encrusted in a mirror. When the glare of the sun beat upon the water at noon, it seemed more like blue steel than glass. Occasionally the impression would be broken by the grim vertical fin of a shark, cleaving its way near the surface. Flying fish dashed at us from the horizon like silver arrows and, when they dived into the water, we heard a distinct *plop* in the blazing silence. *Mantas,* a sort of giant underwater bat, winged their way beneath the surface around the schooner.

At night the clouds gathered, the wind broke loose once more and we were at its mercy. Silent flashes of lightning crisscrossed the sky, accompanied shortly afterward by faint rumblings, then by heavy thunder. In the morning all was quiet and serene again. The weather was playing a game with us—lashing us in the night, and pretending to know nothing about it in the morning. This operation continued, and became monotonous. In the meantime the guns were going off in Europe, great armies were sweeping in interminable battle lines over the Old World, and here I was fighting a damn' fool sky on a faraway sea on top of a cargo of melting ice!

Tumbling one way and another, we came within sight of Santa Lucia. But being within sight proved to be quite different from being within reach. In the night the storm would toss the schooner about blindly, sometimes bringing it within one hundred yards of the shore, and in the morning it would be left becalmed in view of the still palms and reddening mangoes.

And, to make matters worse, the ice, melting, became loose, and began sliding back and forth in the hold, bumping the sides of the schooner with tremendous force when the boat rolled. It was as if a number of battering rams had decided to go on their own, and then had gone crazy about it. This increased the danger of our perishing within a few rods of the shore. At the end of the tenth night, amid a terrific thunderstorm, the crisis came and passed. The schooner sank low on the starboard side so that the belly of the mainsail dipped into the water. The skipper lost his head completely and I, turning the wheel on the stern frantically, could do nothing beyond cheering him on, urging him not to loose his nerve, telling him that everything was all right, which was not true. In my desperation I must have managed the rudder in such a way that the boat made a dash for the rocky cape on one of the sudden and capricious gusts of wind that had been harassing us, and it was about to dash itself to pieces when a turn of the wheel brought it sidewise along the shoreline. To my surprise, the schooner straightened with a sure, lazy movement and we found ourselves in calm waters, while the sea boiled and raged only a few yards away. It seems that we had hurdled a reef into a refuge of still waters.

After that, as the wind was going strong, we took advantage of the thin line of calm water along the shore to proceed to the harbor of Santa Lucia, where we arrived in two hours, exhausted and thankful. I looked up the harbor master, Captain Turner, whom I had met in Caracas some years before, and evening found me on the veranda of his house, overlooking the crazy sea and drinking whisky-sodas—without ice.



DURING the two days that I spent in Santa Lucia, the population, which was jumpy in the nerves, suffered a scare which brought the war close to them. I had been inspecting a long trench which the native yeomanry had dug on the beach at the foot of the stone mole, amid much beating of drums and blowing of bugles, without realizing that the first enemy shell that struck the mole would sweep them out of the trench like so much dust. I went to Turner's office to call his attention to this observation and found him engaged in a telephone conversation, very worried.

A German cruiser, he was told, had headed for the harbor. We ran to the end of the street and saw a lean gray cruiser hovering near the bar, covered by a thick cloud of smoke. Across the smoke screen I could make out the German war flag flying from her stern. Turner realized that the game was up.

One broadside from that sea hyena would have been sufficient to break up the town and send it up in flames. It was a bad moment for Turner.

But a few minutes later, when the smoke cleared, we discovered to our great relief that it was a British cruiser that had thrown the town into a state of nerves. Through the smoke the colors of the German and British war flags could easily appear alike, as many seamen were to discover later on, sometimes to their advantage, sometimes to their disgust. And as I looked at the beautiful creature from the wharf a few moments after, I could not suspect that in three short months I was going to meet some of her sister ships along the Turkish Coast in a more aggressive mood and that, at that time, if Captain Turner should come in contact with me, he would have to arrest me instead of offering me his home and his Scotch whisky.

The next morning I left on an American tramp steamer for Fort-de-France in the island of Martinique, and arrived there in twenty-four hours. The chances of embarking for Europe did not seem better there than elsewhere. The bay was heavily mined, as a German cruiser had been sighted off the entrance of the harbor the day before. The only boat that was expected to leave for Europe that week was the French mail boat from Cayenne, on which no passengers were taken, even in peace times. My job was getting irksome, to say the least. I made up my mind to travel on that mail boat no matter what I had to do to get aboard and remain there. I decided that if I went about it systematically, as behooved a military man, I would get there.

So, as a first measure, I visited that night a certain cabaret where I knew a beautiful Creole girl, one of the dancers there. I had met her during a former visit to the island, and found her more beautiful than ever, and ready to lend me a helping hand. Mlle. Nanette was an all around good sport and she had some valuable acquaintances on the island. One of her ardent admirers was a wealthy French-Alsatian merchant, whose pull with the governor was well known. He sat at our table, full of champagne; and, with Nanette's help, we became close friends at once.

On the following night we met again at the cabaret, and I thanked my new friend, for I already had in my pocket a written permission to travel on the Cayenne mail steamer as a *recommandé* of the governor. After we put the Alsatian to bed, Nanette, who had stood by me like a true friend, kept singing to me until dawn a beautiful Creole melody, which I am still in the habit of humming when I feel lonesome.

Two weeks later our boat steamed into the mouth of the Garonne. A transport ship full of French Spahi troops passed us on its way to Morocco. Some one pointed out to me the battlements of an old fortress, half hidden behind a screen of cottonwood trees, in which several dozen German officers, captured in the recent Battle of the Marne, were said to be held as prisoners. As the French authorities were very careful about passports, I felt dismayed, believing that new difficulties would turn up to impede my progress. Nothing happened, however. The officials passed me by entirely. I was a *recommandé* of the governor of Martinique, so naturally, I was supposed to be O. K.

Leaving my luggage at the nearest hotel, I rushed to the Venezuelan consulate to secure a passport. The consul refused to give me one on the grounds that I was a revolutionist. He tried to appear friendly and told me he would lose his job if he granted my request. So I went to Paris to try my luck with the Venezuelan minister there. The minister and most of the personnel of the legation had left for Madrid. Only an attaché remained, and all he could do for me was to give me a few lines of introduction, on a visiting card, for the Venezuelan consul at Havre, which he placed in an envelop with the letterhead of the Venezuelan legation.

When my train stopped in Rouen for a

few hours, the town was full of reserve troops being rushed to the Front. The station buzzed like a beehive. While wandering through the crowd, I stopped idly to look at a stack of rifles left standing against a wall. Immediately a plainclothesman stepped up to me, doffed his black derby and asked me very politely for my papers. Keeping cool—for I knew that the firing squad is freely used in times of national danger, and that a foreigner inspecting rifles without a passport was, in those days, a walking corpse—I leisurely produced the envelop with the letterhead of the Venezuelan legation in Paris. The plainclothesman returned the envelop to me without opening it, bowing deeply and uttering all sorts of apologies.

The Venezuelan consul at Havre was seriously ill—or had learned of my presence there—and could not be seen. Tired of these obstacles and evasions, I went to the British consulate and asked to see the vice-consul. He proved to be a gentleman. He laughed heartily when I told him my adventures since leaving Curaçao, and exclaimed:

"I admire your nerve. I will give you a safe-conduct, which will enable you to go to London unmolested."

At Dover everybody had to submit to a thorough examination. The authorities seemed to think that a man could be smuggling documents into the country inside his skin, and that ladies might have secret ciphers inscribed in their beauty spots. The safe-conduct given me at Havre freed me of the necessity of submitting to this scrutiny. The inspector simply bowed and allowed me to enter. In London I experienced no difficulty in obtaining a passport from the Venezuelan minister, who was a personal friend of mine. For good measure, I secured another such document from the Colombian minister, with whom I also happened to be acquainted. In those days a man traveling on the Continent without clear cut papers in his breast pocket was likely to find himself with some clear cut bullets in his breast. Espionage was rife, and the several governments had to be on guard.

NEXT morning at eleven I was at the Belgian embassy—monocle, white spats, red buttonhole. The ambassador was not at home. The counselor received me, learned my purpose and, with much rubbing of hands, regretted "*beaucoup*" not to be able to accommodate me. Only the minister of war, at Dunkerque, could authorize my admission into the regular Belgian army on the conditions I expected—complete acceptance of my services without my giving up my citizenship. The counselor advised me to see the chief of the Belgian military mission at Calais, giving me a few lines of introduction to that official.

On my way to Calais my luggage disappeared in some unexplained manner—I regretted the loss of my full dress suit and my top hat, which I had had especially made. Good old Calais was unrecognizable. Its narrow, dirty, ill smelling streets were thronged with a motley crowd of thousands of refugees, who ambled about with big bundles of clothes and bedding on their backs. English, French and Belgian uniforms, still new, were to be seen everywhere, mixing with the battered military tunics of the *poilus* back from the shocks of the first battles. A string of ambulances kept up a steady procession toward the military hospitals. I recognized quite a few German uniforms among the wounded. A big battle seemed to be under way immediately north of Calais.

In spite of the drums and trumpets the general aspect of the town was rather somber. Suspects were arrested in the streets and carried to God knows where—probably to be shot, for "*la guerre c'est la guerre*," and the German intelligence department was working overtime in those days. Batteries would roll by with a rattling of wheels and much shouting of orders. Civilians would scurry to the sidewalks to let them pass.

That night, no hotels being available,

I rented an armchair in the house of a charming mademoiselle who had already rented her bed to two other travelers and who had the foresight to bring in food and wine to make up for the discomfort of the armchair. She herself slept—when we were not drinking or singing—on a mattress that she had rigged up on the kitchen table.

The colonel in charge of the Belgian military mission, whom I visited the next morning, was a grizzled old soldier, rather untidy but very courteous, as the Belgian *valons* generally are. He told me frankly that he did not believe the minister of war would admit me into the regular army unless I relinquished my Venezuelan citizenship. He advised me, however, to go to Dunkerque immediately and submit my case personally to him.

An hour later I was on my way. It was a dreary trip through a flat agricultural landscape—brown plowed up earth, gray sky, occasional brick farmhouses, dirty and with thatched roofs. Several women who wanted to travel north on our military train to see their husbands at the Front were refused admission—a good thing, for women at the Front are nuisances, unless they are nurses and good looking ones at that.

At Dunkerque, where I arrived at eight P.M, I was already within striking distance of the Front. The low rumble of the cannonade floated on the night air from the north and east. The armies were pounding at each other like the devil and it made my heart feel light. "*Yawash, yawash!*" as the Turks say. I was nearing my goal slowly but steadily. Nothing like stick-to-it-iveness and grab-it-and-growl-when-you-get-a-chance. Those crude expressions represent the two fundamental principles on which military success is chiefly based.

At the station I took an old battered *fiacre,* drawn by a despondent Pegasus that surely had forgotten its wings, and just crawled over the cobblestones of ancient and historical Dunkerque, crowded with refugees and soldiers. There was a constant clatter of artillery, drawn by heavy dray horses, accompanied by the tap of innumerable wooden Flamand *sabots* on the resonant cobblestones. Half an hour of crawling behind Pegasus brought me to the most fashionable hotel in the town. It was situated in the City Hall Square. In front of it rose the bronze statue of an old Flamand pirate, a symbol of "Help Yourself and God Will Help You."

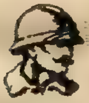
The hotel was strangely illuminated, and crowded to the doors. I registered—which meant that I gambled on getting a mattress—and went into the dining room to eat, for I was famished. The soup was not quite bad. I was enjoying it in a warlike spirit when the waiter approached me very solemnly and said that some one in the lobby wished to speak to me. This interruption annoyed me, but following my old motto, "rather dead than impolite," I stepped out to see my inopportune caller. He was a French army captain, who requested me in courteous but determined language to accompany him to the *commandance d'armes*—military headquarters—to prove that I was not a German spy.

The thing had happened after all. A platoon of soldiers which I had not particularly noticed surrounded me with fixed bayonets and escorted me to the *commandance,* where I fully expected to be dispatched into another world by orders of a drum court-martial and by act of a firing squad in the back of the building. It was not quite pleasant to be marched between two rows of fixed bayonets along streets crowded with rubbernecks feeling happy that some one was going to be shot. As I saw it at that moment, the situation amounted to this: I was going to the scaffold, for in those days the French military authorities could not, and did not, waste their time examining the complete records of foreigners who happened to stray into such important fortified towns as Calais and Dunkerque.

I remember the good natured, fat sergeant who was leading the platoon. He touched me lightly on the arm and said:

"Do not worry, *mon fils.* Everything will be all right."

I wondered whether he had inside information, or whether he believed that death was the end of human suffering and that when you died everything was all right with you. I looked at him curiously, and the thought crossed my mind that he might be a German spy. I still am not certain that he was not, for the German I.D. had its feelers everywhere in those first bungling weeks of the war.



THE *commandance d'armes* was a dirty gray building guarded by a company of French soldiers in brand new uniforms. I was led up the resounding stairs and into a room dimly lighted by a gas lamp—a fine location for a moving picture court-martial—dark, melodramatic, ominous. All that was lacking to give a perfect sound movie atmosphere was an orchestra playing Chopin's "Funeral March."

The *officier du jour* was seated with several other officers behind a long desk: a regular drumhead court-martial waiting for its next victim. The officers rose and responded to my military salute with a similar one—the French never forego the amenities of polite intercourse. The *officier du jour* asked me for my papers, very affably but with a business-like air. Without saying a word I handed him my diplomatic passport, a certificate from the Colombian minister to London recommending me to all Colombian consuls in France, a letter of identification, and two of recommendation, signed by the counselor of the Belgian embassy in London and by the chief of the Belgian mission at Calais. All the officers read the papers, and then the *officier du jour* handed them back to me with his excuses and assured me that the mistake would not be repeated.

All I said was "*Merci beaucoup, mon Capitaine,*" and made straight for my hotel to finish my supper. I had to go to bed with a ravenous hunger, for the hotel restaurant, and all others in the town, were closed—military law, nine o'clock curfew. But I was very glad that the officers had not considered it necessary to ask me questions as to my past and connections, for they might have found out that I had been educated in Germany since the age of seven, that my brother-in-law was a German nobleman and an officer of the Imperial Guards, etc. If on that evidence they had ordered me shot, I would not have blamed them. I would have done the same under similar circumstances; you can't take chances on hard luck stories when the lives of thousands of your fellow soldiers are at stake.

The minister of war was out. The minister of state was out. They had been summoned by the king to army headquarters at Furnes. The officials left at the old city hall of Dunkerque could give me no answer until either or both their Excellencies returned. This, fortunately, happened the next day. On my way up to the minister of war's office, a British officer, escorted by a platoon of Belgian soldiers with fixed bayonets, passed me. A spy, caught with the goods, being taken to the same *commandance* where I had had such a narrow escape two days before.

The minister received me very cordially, and he became quite friendly when he noticed my monocle and the Order of Bolivar glittering in my buttonhole. He could not know, of course, that the Order had been forwarded to me for no reason whatever by President Castro when I was a kid, and that it was fourth class. But the fact is that all medals and haberdashery are extremely useful in Europe. In some European courts the uninitiated is apt to take a uniformed butler for a high chamberlain—they both wear high silk stockings, knee breeches, gold braided swallow tails, and a solemn expression on their faces. The only difference that you may notice upon closer acquaintance is that the butler usually has more brains than his Excellency.

The affable minister could do nothing favorable to my plans. He advised me to see the king, at Furnes, and wrote me in his own hand a letter thanking me for my generous offer in the name of the Belgian government. While his Excellency was showering courtesies on me, as diplomats will do when they want to say "nothing doing," the cannon were shooting their heads off a few miles away, and I thought the war might be over any minute without my having got into it.

That afternoon two German airplanes hovered over Dunkerque, and the camouflaged machine guns in the cathedral tower did not seem able to get them in range. The whole town was nerve racked by the two silent threats, circling above it in the clouds.

Several trainloads of British soldiers arrived that day in Dunkerque. I could not help admiring the smartly dressed, monocled British officers, who threw themselves so gallantly into the fray. They combined the qualities of a soldier, a gentleman and a sportsman, which makes the British officer so well liked wherever he goes. Two of them became friendly with me, and we sat that night in a café to have a few drinks and pass the time. While we were there, a commotion occurred outside the door and, going over to find out its cause, we saw a French general being arrested by a Belgian sergeant, because it was after nine o'clock and the general did not have his papers with him. The furious general and his A.D.C. were marched between two rows of bayonets to the *commandance* while the two British officers and myself laughed at his predicament and drank his health, which seemed to be reasonably safe, for he would undoubtedly be recognized by the *officier du jour.*

THE GERMAN flyers appeared over Dunkerque again the next day. This time they meant business. Two bombs were dropped. One of them went clear through the roof of a military hospital and exploded in the basement, wounding several soldiers who were already wounded. The other ripped open the pavement of the street between my hotel and the city hall—which had of course been its objective. The shock broke windows for blocks around. I was having a nap when the explosion occurred and I woke up with a shower of glass splinters falling over my bed.

Before an hour had passed a new "order of the day" was posted on all street corners: All foreigners were ordered to leave Dunkerque within twenty-four hours, and all German and Austro-Hungarian subjects who should be found within the city limits after that time, regardless of sex, would be shot on the spot.

That broke up the show so far as I was concerned. I had made arrangements to proceed to Furnes the next day to see the king. Instead I had to go to the *commandance d'armes* to get my papers visaed. At the *commandance* a French colonel, whom I had never met, but who had heard of my purpose, approached me while I was talking to my British friends and said in a patronizing way—

"*Mon cher ami*, as the Belgians have refused to accept your services, why don't you join us, the French?"

"I beg your pardon," I answered quickly. "The Belgians have not refused my services. I was to see the king, who is the only authority in that matter, at Furnes. I was a friend of Leopold II, and I feel confident that King Albert would have received me into the regular Belgian army without my relinquishing my citizenship. Now, as I can not go to Furnes, I would gladly join the French *regular* army—if I were requested to do so in an official manner, always with the proviso that my Venezuelan citizenship should remain unimpaired."

"*Comment donc?* You demand to be admitted into our regular army?" the colonel fairly barked at me. "*Jamais de la vie!*" he went on. "For gentlemen like you we have the Légion Étrangère!"

I did not take the trouble to answer his dime-museum arrogance, but simply turned my back on him and continued conversing with my English friends, while the colonel, after snorting for awhile like an infuriated walrus or a winded old cab horse, walked away to forget what a fool he had made of himself. It would, of course, be unfair to judge the gallant French regular army officers' corps by the behavior of that lobster of a colonel, for stray cows like him are likely to be found in every army in the world.

It was no primrose path that finally led me to the Turkish army, where I was received on my terms and where I rendered services which I would gladly have given to the Allied cause. No one, I believe, ever experienced so many difficulties to get into a fight as I did before I donned the *kalpak* and led twelve thousand soldiers under the flag of the Prophet.

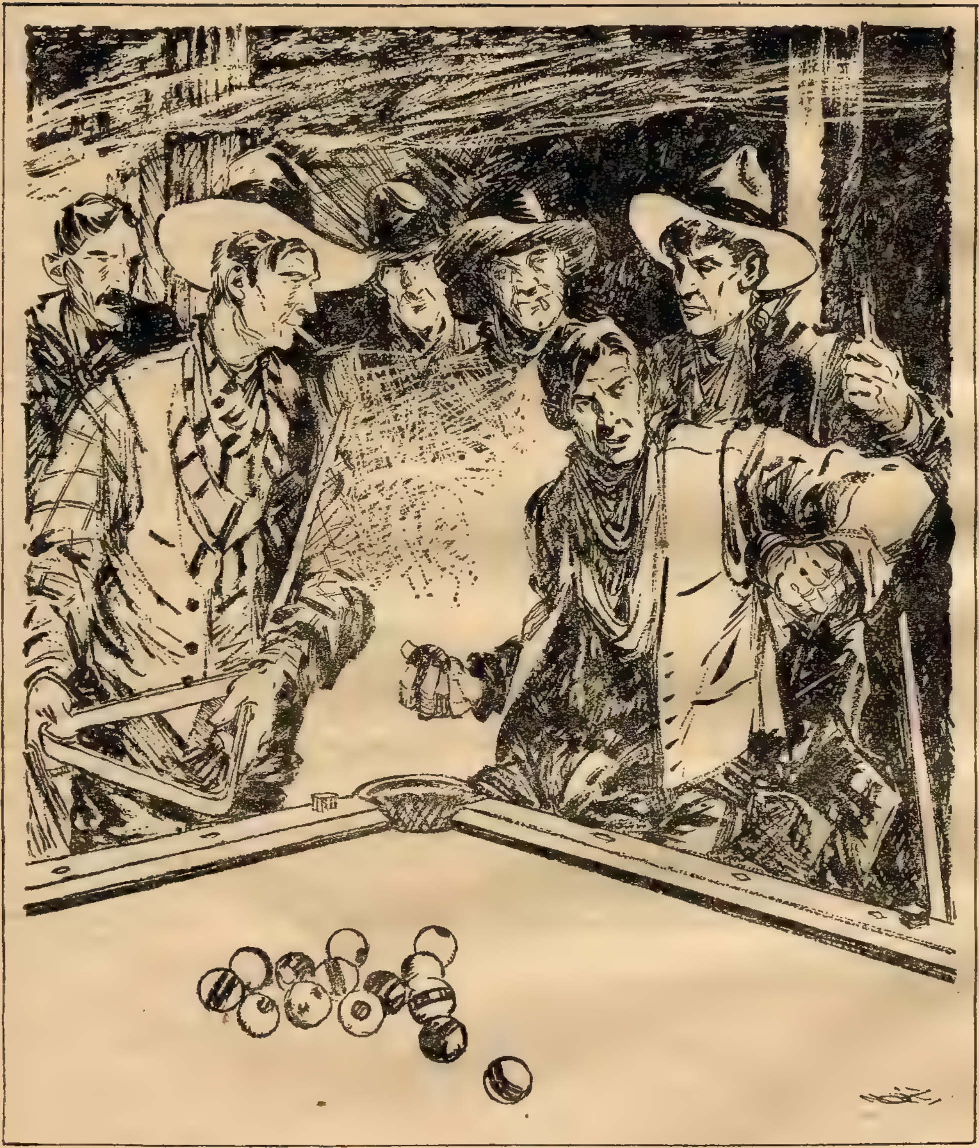
In Montenegro, for instance, I narrowly escaped being executed as a German spy. (I have referred extensively to this incident in my book, "Four Years Beneath the Crescent".) The last days of 1914 found me in Sofia, Bulgaria, where I called upon my old friend, General Savoff, commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian army during the Balkan War. I also met there Von der Goltz and Fethi Bey, Turkish minister to Bulgaria. These two gentlemen invited me immediately to join the armies of the Central Powers, without loss of my citizenship—simply on my word of honor. My right to join the war on my terms was thus vindicated.

Two days later I arrived in Constantinople, where I was well received by Marshal Liman von Sanders, chief of the German military mission in Turkey, and hero of the Dardanelles campaign. He and General Bronsart von Schellendorf Pasha, chief of staff of the Turkish army, presented me to Enver Pasha, who befriended me at once and offered me a commission as a superior officer in the Turkish regular army—on my simple word as a gentleman and a soldier to support the flag while in the service, a trust which I lived up to faithfully until the end of the World War.

Two weeks later I was snowed in in the little town of Erzyndian, in the heart of Asia Minor, surrounded by the Kurd and Armenian infested mountains of the Caucasus, dozing away in my field bed, and letting Tasim's second cup of strong Turkish coffee cool at my elbow.

In a few months I had been transformed from a rebel leader of *llanero* cowpunchers fighting the Gomez dictatorship in Venezuela, into a knight of the Crescent, fighting against the very nations that had refused to accept my services only a short time before.

After all, a cause is a cause. It may be more or less just; what is said in its defense may be more or less true. Who can be certain? But *la guerre c'est la guerre*—war is war, and I love it.



A SCORE or so of years after a stage had been robbed of two hundred pounds of gold near the Painted Desert, in the Southwest, by three men known simply as Ed and Steve and Spike—one of them, Spike, was left for dead after giving over two infants to Ed and Steve for safe keeping—a series of happenings startled Willow Wells out of its usual quiet.

Jim McGowan, owner of the Diamond R outfit, was shot and killed at a party given by Steve Pelliser, of the SP ranch, celebrating the nineteenth wedding anniversary of his friend, Edward Hart, the banker of the Wells.

Then a stranger was kicked in the face by a horse before the War Paint Saloon. His features made unrecognizable, he sneeringly gave his name as Smith.

And Bill McGill came from San Francisco bent upon discovering who he was.

Concluding

MAVERICKS

A New Novel of Hashknife and Sleepy

By W. C. TUTTLE

Bill was twenty. He met Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens in High Grade, and they saved him from two crooked cowboys. Bill then became lost from his friends and wandered into the SP ranch, where Mary Pelliser, pretty daughter of the owner, nursed him for exposure suffered along the road. Hashknife and Sleepy followed and secured jobs with Steve Pelliser.

Edward Hart, the banker, was killed while Bill McGill was in his house conferring about a job; and Bill was jailed because he was found with a gun in his hand and a confused story on his lips.

Bill was released from his cell by some one, and turned up at the SP ranch again, where Hashknife and Mary Pelliser hid him in an old dugout. And Hashknife set himself upon investigation of the case.

Then the Bank of Willow Wells was robbed by a lone operator; and Scotty McGowan, working the Diamond R after the death of his brother Jim, was caught running his brand on SP cattle. When accused by Steve Pelliser, Scotty asked for a private word with the SP owner.

After talking for a few minutes Pelliser, gray and worried, dropped the case completely. And Scotty laughed and left with the man Smith, who was working for him.

Hashknife, casting about for any clue to any of the mysteries, learned that the Santa Dolores stage had been robbed years before when the mining boom was on. He went to the nearly deserted town and discovered that one of the robbers had been tried there. An ancient was only too willing to talk:

"That feller's name was Neilson—Nelson—Neilan? No, it was Neal—well, somethin' like that . . ."

CHAPTER XV

BILL IS TAKEN FOR A RIDE

THE mellow notes of One Hop's gong echoed from the hills as the three men in the SP bunkhouse drew on their boots that morning. They had been trying to frame up something to tell Mary about Pink Lowry. None of them knew what time Pink left the ranch.

"Mebbe we better lay off Pink," said Thursday. "Steve ain't in no joshin' frame of mind, you know, and if we've got anythin' funny to pull off, we better wait until Steve ain't there."

Thursday stamped into his boots and went outside, where he headed for the stable. It was religion with Thursday to see that his horse was all right before eating breakfast. Sleepy and Sid finished dressing and went up to the back porch, where they performed their morning ablutions at the old wash basins, splattering water all over each other and quarreling over the towel.

Mary came out through the kitchen and they grinned at her.

"Didn't expect you up before noon today," said Sid, seriously.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I dunno. Me, I'd sleep half the day, if I set up all night."

"I wasn't up all night."

"No? Didn't I see Pink ridin' away from here jist at daybreak?"

"You did not, Sid."

"Well, it shore looked like him. I called Sleepy to the winder, and I said, 'There goes young Lochinvar.' Didn't I, Sleepy?"

"Somethin' like that," mumbled Sleepy, his face in the towel. Neither of them had been up at daylight, and Mary knew it.

Thursday was coming up from the stable, half running in his haste.

"Is Steve in the house?" he asked.

"Eating breakfast," said Mary.

"Well, that's danged funny! My saddle's missin'."

"Your saddle?" grunted Sid. "What's th' joke, Thursday?"

"No joke about it—it's gone."

"You prob'ly left it somewhere."

"I hung it up last night, I tell you. I'm not jokin', Sid."

"Huh! I suppose somebody packed it away on their back, eh?"

"I'll betcha they didn't. Sleepy's horse is gone, too."

Sleepy dropped the towel and started for the stable, with Sid and Thursday following. Mary went in and told Steve, who came out at once. There was no question that Sleepy's horse and Thursday's saddle were missing.

"It was shore there when I stabled Pink's horse," said Thursday.

"You don't suppose Pink played a joke on us, do you?" asked Sid.

"That kind of stuff is no joke," said Steve seriously as they went back to the house. "I'll give you another horse, Sleepy, and if that saddle don't show up, I'll buy another one for Thursday."

"That ain't the point—but thanks just the same," said Sleepy. "I'd like to get my fingers on that gent."

"Me too," grunted Thursday. "I jist had that saddle well broke in."

"It ought to be," said Sid. "You've had it five years."

Sleepy had a suspicion that Pink Lowry might know something about the missing horse and saddle, so after breakfast he and Thursday went to town, while Steve and Sid rode east to see how the waterholes were on that side of the range.

One Hop fixed up a nice breakfast for Bill McGill, and Mary took it over to the dugout. He was usually watching for her, but this morning he was not in evidence. She called to him as she went through the open door, but no voice answered her.

Bill McGill was gone!

Mary went outside and looked around, but there was no sign of the boy. She went slowly back to the kitchen. She was satisfied that Bill had broken faith with her—and Hashknife.

"Wha'samalla?" queried One Hop, noting the returned breakfast.

"He's gone."

"He go way all time now?"

"I guess so, Hop. They'll probably catch him and hang him."

"I guess so. Not much blains, eh?"

"That must be it."

Pink Lowry had a triumphant expression in his eyes when Thursday told him about the missing horse and saddle. On account of the bump on his head, Pink was wearing his sombrero at a rakish angle. While Thursday and the sheriff talked about the stolen outfit, Pink went on a hunt for Sleepy, found him in the War Paint and took him aside.

"See that?" Pink removed his hat and pointed to the bump.

"Somebody hit you?" asked Sleepy.

"Bill McGill."

"Aw—"

"I tell you he did. And I'll betcha four bits it was him that stole your horse. The danged pup laid for me and busted my head. He shore put me to sleep."

"I can't believe that Bill would hit anybody."

"You see that bump, don'tcha?"

"Them ain't Bill's initials on it."

"Well, who else would hit me?"

"I'm no mind reader. Ain't you got no enemy, except Bill McGill?"

"None that would lay for me with a club."

Sleepy decided that Pink was all wrong about Bill McGill. He and Thursday rode back to the ranch a little later.

"I don't like this here saddle a-tall," declared Thursday.

"I don't like this horse," grinned Sleepy, "but he's got four legs."

"That's prob'ly the last we'll ever see of our horse and saddle. The sheriff can't do anythin'."

"You didn't expect he'd make a house to house canvass of the county, didja?"

It was nearly dinner time when they got back. Sleepy found Mary alone on the front porch and told her what Pink said about being hit over the head.

"And he thinks Bill McGill hit him," laughed Sleepy. "Prob'ly walked into a post in the dark. And he offered to bet that Bill took my horse and Thursday's saddle."

Mary did not smile, and Sleepy noticed how serious she was.

"There might be some truth in it," she said slowly.

"What do you mean? Ain't Bill—"

"He's gone, Sleepy."

"Well, the danged horsethief! After all you've done—"

"That part is all right. If only he won't get caught."

"He sure won't—if I get my hands on him first."

"Don't tell Thursday anything about it."

"I shore won't. Well, well! Bill McGill! You never can tell which way a dill pickle is goin' to squirt."

IT WAS about nine o'clock that night when Hashknife rode to Cinnabar and dismounted at a vacant hitch-rack near a small saloon. Hashknife had decided not to stay all night in the town, if the same man was in charge of the hotel.

But there was a new proprietor. This one was stooped, rather gray, with a hard face and cruel mouth. Hashknife inquired about the former proprietor, and the man said that Matt Daley had left the country.

"I bought him out. Want a room?"

Hashknife nodded, and the man showed him a room on the second floor, after which Hashknife stabled his own horse. He knew he was taking a chance again, but was sure the new man did not suspect him of being the one responsible for Matt Daley's flight. Hashknife inspected the rest of the main street, but saw no one he knew. In fact, there was hardly any one around the town that evening.

He went up to his room, undressed and went to bed; but the building had absorbed so much heat during the day that it was like a furnace, even with the window open. The partitions were thin, the door warped so badly that he could hear any sound from any part of the house.

A man came in and talked with the proprietor for awhile and was shown a room across the hall near the stairway. Hashknife could not distinguish any voices. Finally the proprietor went down the stairs, his boots creaking an accompaniment to the groans of the stairs.

Hashknife kicked all the covers off and rolled a cigaret. From far off came the bawling of a cow, answered by several more in chorus. He rubbed the fire from his cigaret against the floor and tried to go to sleep.

He was just on the borderland of slumber when he heard more voices downstairs, laughing and talking. He was wide awake now, as their voices came clearly.

“Hello, Sims, you old son of a gun! Since when didja start runnin’ a hotel?”

“Where’s old Matt?”

“He left here. Howdy, boys. What brings you over here?”

“None of your business. Have you been Ed and Jack around here today?”

“Ain’t seen ’em for a week.”

“They was to meet us here tonight.”

Hashknife sat up, listening closely. Ed and Jack were the names of the two cowboys who had tried to bilk Bill McGill in High Grade.

“How’re you fixed for somethin’ to eat, Sims?”

“Reckon I can fix you up a snack. Stayin’ with me tonight?”

“Damn’ right. Got stable room for three good horses?”

“Shore—plenty room. Go right ahead, and I’ll cook some steaks. How do you like ’em?”

“Plenty dead,” laughed a voice. “Git us some bottle beer, will you?”

“Got plenty, but it ain’t awful cold.”

“All right.”

“Match you to see who puts up the broncs.”

“All right.”

The question was finally settled and one man went out, grumbling at his bad luck. There were more cows bawling. Hashknife sat up and rolled another cigaret. There were voices downstairs, but Hashknife could not make out what was being said. From the kitchen came the rattling of pans.

“Hello, waddies!” The voice evidently came from the front doorway.

“Hello, Jack! How are you, Eddie? Been lookin’ for you.”

“Hello, Sam. How’s tricks?”

That was Eddie and Jack, the two crooks from High Grade, decided Hashknife. He recognized the whining voice of Eddie. There was a murmur, and then came the voice of the man who had gone out to put up the horses:

“Where’s Sims? Hey, Sims, c’mere.”

“He’s fryin’ steaks, you bat eared—”

“Damn the steaks! C’mere, Sims.”

Sims came.

“Who owns that sorrel in the stable, Sims?”

“Oh, that one? Belongs to a feller who came here a while ago. He’s upstairs asleep.”

The man dropped his voice, and there was a rumble of low pitched conversation. Then:

“You’re allus seein’ boogers. Them fellers are in Willer Wells.”

“Don’t I know the brand?”

“Sh-h-h! Don’t yell. What room’s he in, Sims?”

“First one to the left of the stairs. What’s all this about?”

“Never mind. You cook them steaks.”

Hashknife was dressing swiftly now. He went to the open window and looked out. He could see the stable in the moonlight. Sliding over the sill, he stretched out to his full length and dropped. He struck yielding sand, fell to his knees, got up quickly and went toward the stable.

Stopping at the door, he looked toward the hotel, but no one was coming. He stepped inside and scratched a match. In the first stall was Sleepy’s sorrel. It was quite a shock to Hashknife to see that horse in Cinnabar, but he quickly untied it, got his gray and led both outside. Off behind the stable, possibly a hundred yards away, was a dense clump of mesquite, and as quickly as possible he tied the two horses behind this cover.

He had not waited to get the saddles. Accordingly, he went back and got them. He noticed that it was not Sleepy’s rig, and wondered if he had taken somebody’s else by mistake. He felt better now. If it came to a case of getting away fast, he would not have to enter the stable.

HE CIRCLED around to the right side of the hotel and found a flight of stairs on the outside, leading to the second floor. He went up cautiously and found the door unlocked. Taking off his boots, he went slowly down the hallway to the door of his room, which he had locked from the inside.

There seemed to be considerable commotion below, so he sneaked over to the head of the stairs. There was the odor of cooking steaks and boiling coffee.

"Where'd you git that horse? That's what we want to know."

"I do not know."

Hashknife almost gasped aloud. It was the voice of Bill McGill.

"Don't be so damn' ignorant, tenderfoot. Remember me, don'tcha?"

"Yes, I believe I do."

"Well, you're worth a thousand dollars in Willer Wells, and we're shore goin' to collect. Where have you been all this time?"

"That is my business, sir."

"Don't git sassy or I'll bust your nose. I owe you that much."

"Aw, let him alone."

"Don't make so much noise—" it was Sims' voice. "I've got another sleeper upstairs."

"Well, why didn't you say so?" The voice was angry. "Who is he?"

"I never seen him before."

"What does he look like, Sims?"

They were talking cautiously now.

"Tall, skinny jasper, ridin' a gray horse."

"My Gawd!" blurted one of them.

"Sims, you danged fool! Why didn't you tell us?"

"I was busy cookin' steaks and I didn't think—"

There came a volley of whispers, and a man went out, evidently heading for the stable.

"Damn the steaks!" said one man, loud enough for Hashknife to hear. "My appetite has been ruined."

The man came back, running, and panted softly—

"The sorrel is gone, and so is the gray, if the gray ever was there."

"Heard us and got out."

"See if he's in his room."

Hashknife stepped cautiously into Bill McGill's room, which was in darkness, and several men went down the hall to his room, where they knocked boldly.

"Jumped out the winder," grunted one. "Gimme a little help."

Hashknife heard them throw their weight against the flimsy lock, which broke. After a few moments they came back out, cursing Sims.

"Well, we've got that tenderfoot," said one.

"Yeah, if that's any satisfaction. I'm shore scared to go back now."

"Aw, he didn't see any of us."

"How do you know?"

They went down the stairs, and Hashknife sneaked back to his own room. He wanted to decide what to do next. It was true that he had not seen any of the men, and he wondered why one of them should say he would be afraid to go back. Was it any crime to come to Cinnabar, he wondered.

It was several minutes before he heard anything more, and then the men were coming back up the stairs. He slid half out of the window, ready to jump again if any of them came to his door; but they did not. He could hear them plainly, now.

"He won't get loose. When I tie 'em, they stay tied. Let's eat."

They tramped down the stairs again, and Hashknife went back to the hall. The door of Bill's room was open. Hashknife moved cautiously and he found the boy tightly bound, lying on the bed. Hashknife pawed him over until he found Bill's head, and whispered softly:

"Keep your mouth shut, Bill. This is Hashknife."

"Good evening," said Bill weakly.

"Not so very good, but danged interestin'," whispered Hashknife, as he unfastened the ropes and helped the boy to his feet.

He cautioned Bill against making any noise, and they went out to the back door and down the steps. They did not stop until they were out to the horses. Bill sat down on the ground, while Hashknife squatted on his heels.

"Go ahead and talk about it," encouraged Hashknife. "What are you doin' over here, and where didja get Sleepy's horse?"

"I really don't understand it all myself. I've really been muddled. I think it was last night when something struck me."

"An idea?"

"Not at all. I had been standing outside the dugout door, looking at the moonlight, when I saw a man over near the stable. He seemed to be acting rather queerly. He seemed to be trying to see without being seen. I distinctly saw him sneak up and peer through the window of the bunkhouse, where I could hear some one playing a string instrument.

"The man went from there almost to the house, but at that moment some one came out on the front porch, and the man came back to the stable. He seemed to be carrying a gun—a rifle, perhaps. Then one of the boys came from the bunkhouse and went to the stable. I rather lost track of this other man, as he had disappeared in the shadow.

"I came out a little farther, but could not see him; so I sat down on the ground for awhile. The other man went back from the stable and entered the bunkhouse. Finally I got up, turned to go back into the dugout, and the man was right behind me, his face in the shadow. He asked me who I was and I—I—"

"You said William Allen McGill."

"Oh, no. I said Bill McGill. And he struck me with something. If it were light enough I would let you look at my head. I'm afraid the swelling will never go down.

"The next thing I knew, I found myself tied to a saddle. Really, I was so sick I could hardly hold up my head, but I could not fall off because of the ropes. It seemed as though I rode for hours and hours before we stopped. It was still dark, but the man had a cloth over his face. He untied me and let me off the horse. I sank right down on the ground and I never was so grateful for anything in my life.

"He said to me, 'It will soon be daylight. You get on your horse and follow this road and don't never come back here again.' He called me names that will not bear repeating, but I was too sick to resent them. I did not get on my horse at daylight. I tied the animal to a bush, stretched out and stayed there nearly all day.

"It was almost night when I finally mounted the horse again, and within an hour I was here. I remembered the place, but I was too miserable, hungry and worried to care what place it was. The man gave me some canned beans, bread and coffee. Then I went to bed. I suppose you know the rest."

"Did you recognize any of the men who roped you in there?"

"Just one—the man who arrested me in High Grade."

"Nick Lee of the Diamond R, eh?"

"Yes. They were going to take me back to Willow Wells and get the reward."

"What are they doin' over here?"

"I asked Mr. Lee that identical question, and he slapped me across the mouth. Some day I shall—"

"Better let it out on shares, Bill. Lee's a salty gent."

Hashknife untied the horses and they both mounted. As far as they could see, everything was serene at the hotel; but Hashknife knew the gang would be rather excited to find that their captive was not where they left him. They traveled north out of town for a short distance, and then cut across to the east to strike the old road to Willow Wells, but found their way blocked by a barbed wire fence. Investigating as well as he could in the dark, by riding along the fence, Hashknife decided that the wire enclosed about twenty acres of land, and that there was an opening on the east side, guarded only by three long poles.

Cows bawled softly. Hashknife could make out several dark shapes. Leaving Bill outside the bars, Hashknife rode in and moved among the cattle. The light was very bad, but the cowboy estimated that there were at least a hundred head within that enclosure. He slowly herded some of them into a corner, where he leaned as close as possible and scratched a match.

A wild-eyed steer moved back, not over five feet away, and by the light of the match Hashknife plainly saw a six pointed star vent brand on its left shoulder and a Diamond R on its left hip. Both brands were fresh. Hashknife knew now what it was all about. The Diamond R was stealing cattle in Willow Valley and bringing them over to Cinnabar to Ed Reese and Jack Erb for disposal. This would give the Diamond R boys a chance to get back to their ranch before morning.

Hashknife rode back to the bars, pondering deeply. There were at least three of the Diamond R—Ed Reese, Jack Erb, and the man Sims, who owned the hotel. Sims would naturally side with his friends. Hashknife knew that Bill McGill would be of no assistance to him, and he did not feel like tackling five men single handed. By this time they would have discovered the loss of their thousand dollars' worth of prisoner and be on guard.

"We're goin' back to the Pelliser ranch," he told Bill. "I don't like fightin' with cattle rustlers in the dark, so we'll hightail it for home. We'll get back there about four o'clock in the mornin', if we can keep on that old road in the dark. If them clouds break away and give us some moonlight, we'll make it earlier. C'mon."

"I shall be pleased to get back," said Bill. "I don't know what Mary thinks of me, going away without even saying goodby. But really, I had nothing to say about the matter. I hope she will understand."

"Leave it to Mary. She's got a lot of *sabe* for a girl."

"I don't know what that word means, but she is wonderful."

"Means the same thing. You give that bronc his head and he'll stick to the trail. All you have to do is set there and ride."

"And that," said Bill painfully, "is quite enough to keep me out of mischief."

CHAPTER XVI

PINK GOES CALLING

PINK LOWRY came out that evening. Perhaps he came to gloat over what Bill McGill had done to his erstwhile friends. Pink had forgiven Bill the wallop over the head. He was willing to forgive Bill anything, as long as he stayed out of Willow Valley.

Mary was a little sad over the whole affair, but tried to hide it. She and Sleepy had discussed Bill, and Sleepy greatly desired Bill's scalp for stealing his horse. He also desired Bill's scalp for betraying Mary's friendship. As far as Pink's sore head was concerned—Sleepy had no interest in Pink Lowry.

"Dad says he will give you another horse," Mary told him.

"Yeah, I know all about that. It's shore square of him, but I like that sorrel bronc. I hate to be stolen from by a tenderfoot."

Pink and Mary talked about Bill after her father went to bed. Steve was just a trifle curious as to why Pink came out there two nights in succession, and had stopped at the head of the stairs. He liked Pink, and he was not going to interfere with any love making, but he stopped long enough to hear Pink say:

"Well, my head is pretty sore, Mary, but what makes me more sore then the busted head is the fact that he throwed you down."

"You have to make allowances for Bill," said Mary. "He's not like the men out here. He doesn't think the way we do. My opinion is that Bill got so frightened he had to leave, and he didn't stop to consider the ethics of the case at all. He likes Sleepy, and I'm sure there was nothing malicious about his taking Sleepy's horse. Hashknife had a long talk with Bill, and he frightened Bill."

"That's all right," grinned Pink, "but there *was* somethin' malicious about the way he slapped me over the head in the stable."

"Another case of fright. You surprised him when he was taking the horse."

"Well, he shore surprised me."

Steve went to his room, where he sat down to puzzle it out. Now he knew Mary, Pink, Hashknife and Sleepy had been hiding Bill McGill somewhere on the ranch. Bill had struck Pink over the head, taken Sleepy's horse and Thursday's saddle. Thursday probably did not know anything about it. That is, he had no hand in the affair. But why were they hiding Bill? There was a thousand dollar reward for Bill, and Pink Lowry, the deputy sheriff, was helping to shield him. He wondered what it was all about.

He smoked in his room until he heard Pink leave, and then went down the stairs to meet Mary. She seemed greatly surprised to see him. He did not beat around the bush at all, but came right to the point. Mary turned a little white, but was rather defiant.

"He—he came out here that night," she said. "Hashknife was with me, and we—he knew they'd hang Bill. We hid him in the dugout, where he has been ever since. Hashknife—"

"Hashknife was at the bottom of it, eh?"

"Do you want to see Bill McGill hanged, Dad?"

Steve's face was very grim, but he shook his head negatively. Then—

"You ain't stuck on Bill McGill, are you, Mary?"

"Not a bit of it."

"He's stuck on you."

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh, couldn't I see it? When he looks at you he looks like a bogged calf. I'm not blind. So he's gone, eh? Stole a horse and a saddle, did he? Hm-m-m. Well, I'll gladly replace the horse and saddle, if he'll never come back."

"But, Dad, they'll catch and hang him."

"He's nothing to you, is he?"

"Well, I don't want to see him hanged. Hashknife says—"

"Oh, dang Hashknife! Where is he?"

"You know as much as I do."

"I suppose I do. When he shows up I'm goin' to fire him. There's been nothin' but trouble around here since he came. I'll fire Sleepy and him and hire a couple of ignorant cowboys."

"Don't do that."

"I'm goin' to, just the same. You go to bed, Mary."

It was about four o'clock in the morning when Hashknife and Bill reached the ranch. Bill went back to his dugout, and Hashknife, rather than disturb the boys in the bunkhouse, climbed up into the hay loft and went to sleep.

And it was Thursday who discovered the return of Sleepy's sorrel. He went whooping around to the bunkhouse and yelled the news. Steve was on the back porch; he came down to the stable.

"That's my sorrel all right," declared Sleepy. "And there's Hashknife's gray!"

"That's right," snorted Sid Brayton. "But where on earth did *that* saddle come from?"

"Who wants to know?" grunted Hashknife, peering down through the hayhole in the stable ceiling.

"C'mon down here and talk about it," laughed Sleepy; and Hashknife came down to them.

He looked keenly at Steve, wishing him far away from there just at that time.

"Hyah, boys," he said. "How's everythin' around here?"

"Where in the world didja find my horse and that saddle?"

"Oh, yea-a-ah." Hashknife rubbed his nose and looked at the saddle. It was well made, nicely stamped, and had only been broken in.

"My saddle's missin'," said Thursday, "and that shore ain't mine."

"It shore ain't," agreed Sid heartily. "Yours was an old kack, while this'n's a reg'lar hull."

"I'd like to talk with you alone, Hartley," said Steve.

"Oh, shore." Hashknife nodded and they walked around to the corral.

"Where did you find Sleepy's horse?" asked Steve.

"Cinnabar."

"Found Bill McGill, too, eh?"

Hashknife simulated surprise.

"I found the sorrel and a saddle. It was too dark, and I was in too much of a hurry to examine the saddle."

"Yeah? What were you doin' in Cinnabar?"

"Comin' back through there from Santa Dolores."

"Santa Dolores, eh?" Steve picked at a splinter on the fence. "What's the idea of goin' to Santa Dolores?"

"Didja ever do any trailin' with hounds, Steve?"

"No, I never did."

"Well, if you ever do, and you lose the trail, try back. I'm tryin' a long ways back to pick up a cold trail. And I want to tell you somethin' more; there was at least three Diamond R punchers at Cinnabar, and inside a twenty-acre wire fenced patch there was at least a hundred steers wearin' a six pointed star vent on their left shoulders."

Steve's face went black and he walked several yards away from Hashknife, his hands clenched. Coming back, he leaned against the fence, his eyes half closed.

"A hundred head, eh? How could they get away with a deal like that?"

"Bunch 'em at this side of the hills, take 'em through in less than a day, turn 'em over to men on that side and get back here before mornin'."

"Did you *see* any of those men?"

"Nope. I only heard their voices and somethin' of what they said."

"But you didn't see any of 'em?"

"I did not."

"Can you swear they were SP cattle and that the Diamond R took them across the old road to Cinnabar?"

"I can swear to the vented brands, that's all. The old road is cut up by tracks, all headin' west."

"Have you told any one else about this?"

"Not a soul."

"Don't. I'll handle it in my own way. Better come up and eat breakfast."

SLEEPY was curious to know what had happened to Hashknife, and after breakfast the tall puncher told him all about it.

"You tell Mary that Bill is in the dugout again," said Hashknife. "I'm afraid to because I've got a hunch that Steve suspects it. He's watchin' me pretty close."

"But what about them stolen cows? Don't we salivate the Diamond R?"

Hashknife told him what Steve had ordered.

"Well, I'll keep it under my hat, of course," agreed Sleepy. "But jist the same, I don't *sabe* the deal, especially that them Diamond R cow thieves know you were at Cinnabar. They'll try to get you, pardner."

"Yeah, that's a bad feature. Still, there's nothin' to be done. We don't know whether them were SP cows or HN cows. They both brand on the left shoulder, you know."

"Don'tcha think Hoddy Noon ought to know about it?"

"Let Steve tell him."

"Oh, all right. I'm sick of this stuff, anyway."

"I'm gettin' kinda sick myself, Sleepy."

For the next couple of days Hashknife waited to see what Steve was going to do, and as far as he was able to determine, Pelliser did nothing. Steve had not been to town, nor had he sent any word to Hoddy Noon about the vented cattle. Hashknife was disgusted over the affair. He broke his word with Steve and went out to the HN ranch, where he told Uncle Hoddy the whole story.

"And Steve won't do anythin'?" queried Hoddy indignantly. "That's a fine way to do. By golly, I'll do somethin'. I'll keep cases on that Diamond R outfit and if I find an animal with a vented left shoulder brand, I'll shore inoculate some of them jaspers against dyin' of old age."

"I broke my word with Steve to let you know, Noon."

"That ain't breakin' no word, Hartley. What's wrong with Steve? Don't never come over here any more, nor nothin'. I meet him in town, and he ain't like he used to be. He ain't drinkin', is he? No? Mebbe he ain't drinkin' enough. Well, I won't tell him what you said, but I'm much obliged."

Hashknife felt that he had done his duty, and he did not think Hoddy would tell Steve; but he did not consider the fact that Hoddy might get drunk—which Hoddy did. He came to town that afternoon with Caliente and Piute. They rode in from the range, so that Aunt Ida would not suspect them of being in town, and inside of an hour they were as drunk as the proverbial boiled owls.

Hashknife was with Pink at the office and did not even know they were in town until Dud Evans wandered in and said that Hoddy and Steve were having a great argument over something.

"Uncle Hoddy's shore drunk and vociferous," laughed Evans.

Hashknife had a feeling that all was not well, and a little later he met Steve in front of a general merchandise store. Steve was angry and he showed it in every line of his face.

"You're fired," he told Hashknife coldly. "Get your stuff and your pardner off the ranch. Here's what I owe the both of you. You went out and told Hoddy Noon, didn't you? That's fine. You promised to keep your mouth shut, which you didn't. And I want you to understand that I know all about that Bill McGill deal. You kept him hidden in a dugout on my place. If the truth were known, you took that sorrel horse, sneaked Bill out of the country and then came back. Now, I'm all through with you."

"It's a wonder to me that you didn't turn detective." Hashknife grinned. "You shore figure things out. But gettin' fired is all right. I don't want to work for a man who don't care who steals his cows."

"That part of it is *my* business, Hartley."

"Well, every man to his own trade."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean just what I said. Any man who will let another man steal from him and not make any effort to stop it, is as bad as the thief. And when you keep the information from Noon, who might own part of those misbranded steers, you shore *are* as bad as the thief! Think that over, Pelliser!"

Hashknife turned on his heel and went across the street to the hitch-rack, where he mounted his horse and started back to the ranch. He was a little over a mile from town, riding loosely in his saddle, thinking deeply, when a sudden shock seemed to strike his tall gray horse. The animal went down in a jerking heap, while from somewhere came the rattling echo of a rifle shot.

Hashknife barely escaped being pinned by the falling horse, which was only down for a moment. It struggled back to its feet and Hashknife saw the red mark on its neck where the bullet had creased just above the neck bone. Hashknife was a little dazed by the fall, lying on his side, gun in hand. Some one was coming through the brush. Hashknife tried to swing the gun around, but his arm seemed paralyzed. He had struck his elbow in the fall, and his whole arm seemed asleep. Quickly he rolled over on his face, both hands beneath his chest.

He heard footsteps in the dusty road; then he was gripped roughly as his would-be assassins tried to turn him over. Hashknife came to life suddenly.

He grasped the man's feet in both hands and fairly yanked him off the ground. It was done so quickly that the gunmen did not have a chance to save himself. In a flurry of dust both men were on their feet, locked together. Hashknife towered above his antagonist as they grappled for holds. Things were happening in split seconds of time.

Suddenly the man went limp in Hashknife's arms, and another shot echoed through the hills. Hashknife dropped to his knees and eased his attacker to the ground. They were well below the tops of the brush. Hashknife picked up his gun, took one look at the man's face and darted into the cover.

It was Jack Erb, the broken nosed cowboy from High Grade and Cinnabar. Hashknife worked his way farther into the brush, waiting for Erb's companion to appear. Hashknife grinned grimly to himself, realizing that Erb had been hit by a bullet intended for himself.

"Find the man who thinks he's a crack shot," said Hashknife to himself, "and that will prob'ly be this feller's pardner."

Hashknife spent a long time trying to get a line on the shooter, but could not locate him. He found Ghost down in a brushy swale, got on him and headed for the ranch, taking a long detour. The gray horse was not seriously injured. The bullet had seared across his neck, shocking him badly for a few moments, but drawing little blood.

"That jigger shoots low," observed Hashknife. "Shot low on me when I was on the horse, and shot low when me and Broken Nose was wrestlin'. He better get his sights raised."

CHAPTER XVII

HASHKNIFE AND SCOTTY CLASH

PINK LOWRY had heard about Hashknife's bringing back the stolen horse, and Pink was afraid Bill McGill had returned; so he elected to ride out to the ranch with Steve and find out what was what.

And it was they who found Ed Reese, with the two horses, trying to load Jack Erb on one of them. Erb was not dead, but he was so near it that Ed thought he had passed out. Reese was a good liar, and convincing.

"Me and Jack jist come over from Cinnabar," he said, whining a little. "We just hit the road out there a little ways, when *ker-blooie!* Somebody shot Jack off his horse. I ducked in the brush and waited a long time for the dirty bushwhacker to show up, but he didn't come. I knowed Jack needed a doctor, so I started to town."

Steve and Pink examined Jack, who was unconscious. He had been hit in the right shoulder and the bullet had broken him up quite a bit.

"Looks like he's been hit by a .30-30," said Steve.

"Sounded like one," admitted Ed. "Poor Jack, he never done nothin' to anybody, either."

"Take that out and bury it," said Pink. "He's as crooked as a snake in a cactus patch, and you know it, Reese."

"Aw, he's all right, Lowry. Give a dog a bad name, you know."

"He earned his. But that don't matter—he needs a doctor. Can you take him in alone?"

"If you'll help me tie him on. It ain't far."

"Better go to town and get a buggy," said Steve.

"Takes too long. Jist help me lace him on and I'll take him in."

They helped him pack the wounded man, and Reese was profuse in his thanks. But as soon as they left him, he grew bitter in his remarks to his unconscious partner.

"You ain't only crooked, but you're a danged fool, Ed. Runnin' in thataway! Why didn't you stay back? Didn't you see the horse fall? And why didn't you shoot him again? I'm disgusted with you. He knows who you are, and he'll be on my trail. I'll turn you over to a doctor and then I'll fade out. If you die, it'll be a mystery who bushwhacked you—and if you live, that crane legged jasper will prob'ly shoot your topknot off for tryin' to bush him. It don't take no fortune teller to guess that you've got misery ahead of you!"

Sleepy was not at the ranch, but Hashknife told Mary about being fired, and he told her the reason. She admitted that her father knew about Bill McGill.

"I'm frightened to death that he'll investigate the dugout," she said. "I don't know of any other place to hide him."

Hashknife smiled at her.

"Mary, he won't look there. He'd never suspect that we'd be fools enough to bring him back and hide him there. He's sure I took Bill and that horse in order to get Bill out of the country."

"Didn't you?"

"I did not, Mary—and Bill don't know who did. Somebody hit him over the head and took him away."

"I'll bet that was the cry we heard. Oh, I must remind Pink of that. We were on the porch that night, and it startled both of us."

"I was in Santa Dolores that night, and can prove it," said Hashknife.

"What will you do now?"

"I don't know. As soon as Sleepy comes in, we'll get out together. I'm sorry it broke the way it did, but I felt duty bound to tell Noon."

"I'm glad you did, and I'm going to tell Dad."

"I wouldn't. No use stirrin' things up."

"But what in the world will I do with Bill McGill?"

Hashknife grinned softly.

"I reckon we've got a white elephant on our hands, lady. I'll have to do a little thinkin'."

Hashknife was down at the stable when Steve and Pink rode in. Steve stabled his horse, while Pink told Hashknife about meeting Reese and his wounded partner.

"Oh, them two punchers from over Cinnabar way. Well, well! Bushwhacked, you say?"

"That's what Reese says. No warnin' at all."

They talked about it for several minutes before Steve came out. His expression was rather serious as he said to Hashknife—

"What happened to your gray horse, Hartley?"

"Happened? Nothin' that I know of, Steve."

"He's been creased with a bullet, it seems."

"Yeah, I noticed that. I reckon he rolled over a snag or somethin'."

"Probably," Steve said dryly, and Pink followed him to the house.

It was suppertime when Sleepy came back to the ranch. He was glad he had been fired and he told Steve so.

"Stay until after supper," begged Mary. "I want a chance to talk with you about Bill McGill."

They agreed, and while they were eating supper Buck Haskell, of the Diamond R, rode in and asked to see Steve Pelliser. Hashknife would have given a lot to hear what passed between them, because Steve went straight to the stable, saddled his horse and rode away toward town with Haskell without finishing his supper.

None of the boys at the supper table said anything about it, but they thought deeply. Mary came out to the table and sat down with them, but did not eat. She was worried about her father, and after supper she called Hashknife out to the front porch.

"Buck Haskell brought Dad a note," she whispered, "and I've got the note!"

"How did you get it?"

"The right hand pocket of Dad's coat hadn't any bottom. He burned it out with some matches. I was to mend it today, but I forgot. He put the note in that pocket and it fell out. Do you want to read it?"

"Have you read it, Mary?"

"Not yet."

"Uh-huh. I think you ought to. And if you want to tell me what's in it, why, all right."

Mary frowned over the note for a moment, then laughed with relief as she handed it to Hashknife.

"I guess it isn't so bad," she said. Hashknife read it.

> Steve:
>
> Noon had me arrested and jailed. You come down here and prove you sold me a hundred head of stock and that I had a right to vent brand them.
>
> —S. McGOWAN

Hashknife laughed, but there was no humor in his gray eyes as he handed the note back to Mary. He knew, or was fairly positive, that Steve had not sold any cattle to Scotty McGowan lately. But Mary accepted the explanation.

Pink came out to them, and their chance to talk about Bill McGill was lost because Mary did not want to tell Pink that Bill was back. Hashknife and Sleepy saddled their horses, while Thursday and Sid complained bitterly over their discharge.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing," declared Thursday. "If things don't change pretty danged soon, I'm goin' to quit my job. I'll betcha that Diamond R outfit are stealin' us blind. Whatcha s'pose Haskell wanted Steve for? I don't *sabe* Steve no more. Used to be a fighter, but his guts has all turned to fiddle strings. You boys ain't leavin' the country, are you?"

"Not for a day or two," said Hashknife. "We'll come back and tell you goodby."

"That's fine."

THEY rode up to the house and shook hands with Mary and Pink. Hashknife promised Mary that they would come out again before leaving the Valley.

"I'll see you in town," said Pink as they rode away.

On the way to town Hashknife told Sleepy about being bushwhacked, and the perhaps fatal results to the broken nosed cowboy from High Grade.

"They both laid for me, and the skinny one slammed a .30-30 into his pardner. I shore heard it hit—and if that guy ain't dead, he's as tough as he looks. Them two jiggers came over here to put me out of the game 'cause they know I fooled 'em at Cinnabar. But I'll bet you ten to one that the skinny one won't be in Willow Wells when we get there. If he is, I'll shore bend him all out of shape."

They stabled their horses and went over to the sheriff's office, which was empty, and sat down to enjoy a smoke. It was possibly thirty minutes later when the sheriff came in. He sat down at his desk, leaned back against the wall and looked at the two cowboys.

"Well," he said disgustedly, "what's new this time?"

"I dunno," grinned Hashknife. "What's on your mind, Dud?"

"You heard about Jack Erb stoppin' a bullet, didn't you?"

Hashknife nodded and blew smoke rings at the ceiling.

"And then Ed Lane and Caliente Smtih dragged Scotty McGowan in here and charged him with misbrandin' HN cows. I made 'em get a warrant, and then I put Scotty in jail. Scotty sends a note to Steve Pelliser, and Steve comes down here to swear that Scotty bought a hundred head of SP cattle and had a right to vent the brand. Ed and Caliente can't prove that it was a HN instead of a SP, so the judge squirshed the warrant and turned Scotty loose."

"Was Scotty mad?" asked Hashknife, trying to poke a finger through one of his smoke rings.

"Mad? I'll tell you he was mad. So was Ed and Caliente."

"How's Jack Erb?"

"One chance in a thousand, the doctor says."

"And where's Ed Reese?"

"I think he pulled his freight."

"I knew he would. Come over to the stable and look at my horse."

They went over, and Hashknife showed Evans the crease on the neck of the animal. And when they went back to the office the tall cowboy told Evans what had happened to Jack Erb and why Ed Reese left Willow Wells.

"Well, the dirty murderers!" blurted the sheriff. "Why pick on you?"

Hashknife explained about the cattle at Cinnabar, but did not mention Bill McGill. The sheriff thought it over for awhile.

"But Steve says he sold the Diamond R a hundred head. If that's true, they were merely movin' 'em out of the country."

"Shore. And them two crooked jaspers shot at me because they had a right to receive them honestly owned cows, eh? Think again, Evans. I heard one man say he'd be scared to ever come back here again."

"But you don't think Steve Pelliser would lie about sellin' them cows."

Hashknife dropped his cigaret on the floor and ground it out with his heel.

"I'm not claimin' that anybody is a liar," he said slowly. "If Steve is willin' to swear he sold 'em, that's his business."

"We'll have to take his word for it, Hartley."

"Shore. Dud, I'd like to send a telegram to Newton in the mornin' and sign your name to it. The stage driver can send it from Newton for me."

"I dunno about signin' my name. Write it out and let me see it."

Hashknife took a blank sheet of paper and wrote a telegram to the warden of the penitentiary.

SEEKING INFORMATION ON MAN NAMED NEILAN NOLAN NELSON OR NEAL WHO WAS CONVICTED OF ROBBERY AT SANTA DOLORES TWENTY YEARS AGO HAVE YOU ANY RECORD

The sheriff studied the telegram for awhile.

"What's the idea?"

"A lot depends on the answer, Dud. Will you sign it?"

"I guess so. Who was this man, anyway?"

"That's what I want to know."

"Gimme that pencil. That's shore goin' back a long ways. Are you sure he was sent to the penitentiary?"

"Haven't any idea, and I can't find out. If he was, they'd know it."

"Will you tell me what the thing is all about when you get your answer?"

"Yeah, if it's worth tellin'."

"Good enough. I'll ship this out on the mornin' stage. Steve tells me he fired you boys today, but he didn't say what for."

Hashknife laughed softly.

"We ate too much, I reckon."

"That's as good a reason as any other. Well, I think I'll go down and see how Erb is gettin' along. I should have throwed Ed Reese in jail when I had a chance, the danged murderer."

After Ed Reese delivered the wounded Erb to the doctor at Willow Wells, he headed straight for the Diamond R. Reese was frightened. He had fallen down on the job.

Scotty was not at the ranch for the simple reason that about that time he was being held in Willow Wells, while Buck Haskell carried the note to Steve Pelliser. Sam Hall, Barney East and Nick Lee were there, and Scarface Smith rode in shortly after Reese arrived.

"Yeah, I raised hell," said Reese disgustedly. "Me and Jack laid for that long legged Hartley—him in one place and me in another so one of us would shore get a crack at him. I reckon my first bullet creased his bronc, and Jack, like a crazy fool, thought I'd dropped my man and went in to see. From where I am I can't see what happened, but I reckon the tall feller foxed Jack. Anyway they came up together, and I shot too low."

"Didja kill Jack?" asked Sam.

"Well, he got a .30-30 through his body, and if that ain't enough to kill a man he's shore tough. I packed him to town, swore we'd been bushwhacked and then headed for here."

"Did they believe you, Ed?"

"Damned if I know. But I know I'm headin' out of here as fast as a bronc can carry me. That lanky gent is plumb bad luck, and the sooner I get rid of him the better I'll be satisfied."

"Where are you goin'?" asked Smith curiously.

"I'm headin' for Cinnabar."

"Hell, they ain't got nothin' on you," said Hall. "Hartley didn't see you, did he?"

"Mebbe not."

"Wait here until Scotty gets back. It's a cinch that Hartley won't come out here. At least, he better not."

"I think I'll go to town and see what I can hear," said East. "Want to ride in, Smith?"

"Yeah, I'll go with you, Barney."

IT WAS dark when they reached town, and they found Scotty in the War Paint with Buck Haskell. Both men were half drunk, and Scotty was in a bragging mood. It was not often that Scotty got drunk—drunk enough to be mean—but he was in that condition now. He told Smith and East of his arrest, punctuating his remarks with hot oaths against the HN outfit. Then he invited every one in the place to drink with him.

They were drinking when Hashknife and Sleepy came in with the sheriff. Scotty wiped the back of his hand across his mouth and considered the three man belligerently, but they paid no attention to him.

"Hello, you weepin' willers," he grunted. "I'm runnin' this place tonight, and don't-cha forget it."

"Cool off, Scotty," advised the sheriff.

"Who'll cool me off if I don't, Evans?"

The sheriff shrugged his shoulders and followed Hashknife and Sleepy back to the pool table, where Sleepy began racking up the balls for a game. Scotty felt hurt at being ignored. He tilted his hat over one eye and came back to the table. Hashknife was chalking his cue, watching Scotty from the corner of his eye.

Scotty halted almost against the table, a sneering grin on his face. Suddenly he reached out, snatched up a ball with his right hand and drew back as if to crash it down among the other balls. But at the same moment Hashknife's cue, rapier-like, flicked over Scotty's left shoulder, the point catching under his right elbow, and the ball shot straight into the air. Hashknife, with a savage wrench, whirled Scotty around and dropped him flat on his back, his right shoulder almost dislocated.

The crash stunned Scotty for several moments, before he got to his feet, his face twisted with pain.

"Any time you want to get in a game of this kind, get yourself a cue," said Hashknife coldly.

The rest of the Diamond R men made no move to assist Scotty; they looked on soberly while their boss rubbed his shoulder. Once Scotty's right hand moved back toward his gun, but the pain in his arm was too much for his nerve.

Sleepy picked up the ball and proceeded to rack the lot again, while Scotty moved away to the end of the bar.

"I've seen a lot of things," said East slowly, "but I never seen anythin' like that before. Jist poled him right off his feet."

"Shut up!" snarled Scotty. "This ain't finished; not by a damn' sight!"

Hashknife laid down his cue and walked over to Scotty, who looked at him rather anxiously.

"Shoulder hurt you?" asked Hashknife.

"What's that to you?"

"Just want to know. I've never killed a cripple yet, and I don't want to start on you. You ain't drunk now. The liquor has all run out of you; so I wouldn't be throwin' lead through a drunken man. Now, you're either able to finish your war talk, or go back home and wait until you are."

"You can't run me out." Scotty shoved out his jaw angrily. "You damn' imitation of a cow detective!"

Hashknife laughed shortly.

"I wondered what you thought of me. So it was you who hired Ed Reese and Jack Erb to bushwhack me, eh?"

Scotty's face went black.

"That's a lie!"

"It's the truth, but I can't prove it."

"You bet you can't. And I'll make you swaller them words."

"Go ahead."

"Boys, that's enough," said the sheriff. "Let's drop it. You're both hot under the collar. Scotty, you better go home."

"You can't run me out of town, Evans."

"All right. You get your bronc and pull out right now, or I'll stick you in jail over night for disturbin' the peace."

Scotty sneered at Evans. No one had ever been jailed in that town for disturbing the peace.

"I'm not foolin'," warned Evans. "Take your choice."

"All right, I'll go home. But you ain't heard the last of this—neither of you. C'mon, boys."

They filed out of the place and a few moments later the men in the War Paint heard the noise of their departure.

"That'll mean trouble," said the sheriff sadly.

"Barkin' dogs," grinned Hashknife, as he lined up his shot.

"I hope it ain't nothin' worse."

The sheriff watched the game for awhile, yawned widely and told them good night. Hashknife and Sleepy played another game, bought a drink for the bartender and themselves and headed back for the hotel. They were in the middle of the street when they saw three riders coming toward them. It was light enough for them to recognize Thursday and Sid. The third man was Bill McGill. Hashknife snorted aloud.

"Hello," said Thursday. "Look what

we caught. Willyum McGill, at our services. Caught the son of a gun peekin' in the ranch-house winder. Can you imagine that? Can you? Me and Sid will split that thousand two ways."

For several moments Hashknife did not know what to say. Then—

"What did he have to say for himself?"

"Not a word. This jigger ain't opened his mouth. Mebbe he's gone dumb."

"He won't tell where he came from, what he wants, nor nothin'. We'll take him to the sheriff and then join you."

"Listen to me, Thursday," said Hashknife seriously. "Bill has been on the ranch ever since he got out of jail. Mary has been feedin' him, and he's been livin' in that dugout behind the stable. She'll be all broke up if she knows he's been taken. In the first place—"

"Why in hell didn't somebody tell us?" asked Thursday.

"You can't spread that kinda knowledge around."

"You say Mary's takin' care of this feller?" asked Sid.

"Ever since he got out of jail. Why, even Pink knows about it, and he ain't tellin'."

"Well, for gosh sake! There goes our winter stake, Thursday."

"Looks thataway. Great gosh! Well, back he goes. I wouldn't hurt Mary."

"Not a chance," agreed Sid heartily. "Let's git off the street before somebody sees him."

"Bill," said Thursday, "can you find your way back to your hole in the hill?"

"I have no doubt of it," replied Bill.

"There!" snorted Thursday. "He ain't dumb. That's the first word he's spoken since we caught him. All right, Bill, you go home. Leave the bronc in the stable. Don't worry about the saddle. We'll take care of that."

And without another word Bill McGill swung his horse around and went back up the street.

"My Gawd!" breathed Thursday. "If I ever want to share a secret, I'll do it with Bill McGill. Let's go and git a drink."

In the meantime Pink left the SP ranch, knowing nothing of what had happened. He had spent the evening with Mary and he was in good spirits. The moon was bright and he sang to the wide world as he galloped along. Suddenly he turned a curve in the road, and almost ran into a rider. He jerked back on his reins in time to avoid a collision. The other horse stopped short.

"Who are you?" grunted Pink.

"William Allen McGill."

"Christmas daisies! Bill McGill!"

Pink was off his horse and up to Bill, poking him with the barrel of his six-shooter.

"So it's you, is it? Why, you danged pin headed— Keep your hands up! Now keep 'em up, or I'll bore you plenty. Stole a SP horse and saddle, eh? Don't move, Willyum, or I'll be obliged to bore holes in your carcass."

Quickly Pink shook out his lariat, and while poor Bill reached for the moonlit sky the deputy sheriff roped him to the saddle. Bill said nothing. In fact, he had nothing to say about it. That was the second time in one evening that he had felt the muzzle of a six shooter.

"That'll hold you," grunted Pink. "Mebbe next time you won't hit me over the head—you amateur horsethief."

Pink mounted, picked up the reins of Bill's horse and headed for town.

"I think you are making a mistake," said Bill timidly.

"Well, if I do, we'll be even; you've already made yours."

Hashknife, Sleepy, Thursday and Sid were in the shadow near the hitch-rack when Pink rode in with his captive; they recognized both men by the light from the War Paint windows.

"Good gosh, Pink caught him!" snorted Hashknife. "C'mon."

They ran across the street, keeping out of the light from the saloon windows. Pink dismounted at the short rack in front of the office, tied both horses carefully and went to the office door. As far as he noticed, the street was deserted. He opened the door and stepped inside the room.

He scratched a match and lighted the

lamp, while Evans lifted up from his cot, blinking at the light.

"Why don'tcha stay out all night?" grunted the sheriff. "By golly, your girl shore costs me lots of sleep."

"Thasso?" Pink grinned at him. "Does, eh? Come out here and see what I've got for you."

"What have you got?" asked Evans.

"Git up and take a look."

Evans grumbled, grunted, but finally got out of bed, while Pink grinned in anticipation of the sheriff's surprise, as he walked over to the door. But the door was stuck. He could tug it open about an inch, but it would not come any farther.

"What's the matter with this danged door, Dud?"

"Stuck?"

"You open it."

Dud tried, but with no better success. Pink frowned. Something was holding it from the other side. He turned, ran through the door that led to the corridor, let himself out through the back door and circled the building. Bill McGill and his horse were gone, and Pink's own lariat rope had been looped aroun the doorknob and tied off tightly to the hitch-rack.

Pink swore bitterly as he unfastened the rope and opened the door. Dud looked him over, squinted at the rope, then grinned.

"Did somebody play a joke on you, Romeo?"

"It may look like a joke to you, but it don't to me. I had Bill McGill!"

"Yea-a-ah? Bill McGill? Where'd you capture him?"

"On the road between here and the SP ranch, ridin' a SP horse and saddle."

"Pink—" severely—"you ain't been smoking *marihuana* weed, have you?"

"I tell you I had him."

"Well, you ain't got him now. You're like a lot of fishermen I've knowed. Better come to bed and sleep it off, Pink. That's what love does to you."

"Aw, hell! Why do you suppose anybody fastened me in the office for?"

"For safe keepin', I reckon. You jist ooze insanity."

"You ain't got a lick of sense, Dud."

"I know it. Every time I look at you I realize it. If I had any, I'd hire me a girl proof deputy. C'mon to bed and forget your hallucinations."

CHAPTER XVIII

SMITH TURNS DETECTIVE

COMANCHE BEADLE swung the stage team through the gate at the Diamond R on his southern trip the next morning, and drew up near the kitchen door of the ranch-house. He had some stuff to deliver. Scotty looked him over sourly, and Comanche grinned to himself. He had heard about Scotty's turning a flip over a billiard cue. Scotty's eyes were bloodshot, but he was perfectly sober.

"Hello, Mulligan!" yelled Comanche to the Chinese cook, who came shuffling out, skillet in hand.

"H'lo," replied Mulligan.

"Got some stuff for you, you flat faced heathen."

Comanche unroped some boxes from the boot and put them on the steps.

"Hyah, Comanche," grunted Scotty.

"Howdy," Comanche grunted back at him. Comanche was a tough old bull whacker. He grinned at Scotty, spat copiously and said, "They tell me you're gittin' good at pool, Scotty."

"They do, eh?" Scotty said coldly.

"Yea-a-ah. They say you shore believe in signs."

"What kinda signs?"

Comanche grinned widely.

"The's a sign in the War Paint which says for pool players to keep both feet on the floor. They tell me you—"

"I'll make somebody laugh out of the other side of their mouth," gritted Scotty angrily.

"They ain't laughin—they're marvelin'."

"Thasso?"

"Uh-huh."

Comanche bit off another generous chew.

"You lived in Santa Dolores a long time ago, didn't you, Scotty?"

"What if I did?"

"'Member a feller named—uh—" Comanche consulted a sheet of paper for a moment—"a feller named Neilan, Nolan, Nelson or Neal, who used to be up thataway about twenty years ago?"

Scotty shut one eye and squinted closely at Comanche.

"What's the idea?"

"I jist thought mebbe you'd know him."

"What about him?"

"Sheriff's sendin' a wire to the penitentiary, askin' for information about this feller. I jist thought mebbe you knowed somethin' about him."

Scotty hitched up his overalls and walked over to look at the boxes. Comanche climbed back on his seat, picked up the lines and sat there, looking at Scotty.

"You didn't say," reminded the old driver.

"Didn't say what?"

"Whether you knew him."

"Knew who?"

"Feller named Neilan, Nolan, Nelson or Neal."

Scotty's face turned red, puffed angrily and he seemed about to turn the vials of his wrath on old Comanche. Then he took a deep breath.

"Comanche, if there was a taxidermist around here, I'd shoot you and have you stuffed. I don't know any Neilan, Nolan, Nelson or Neal. Git to hell away from here before I haul you off that stage and rub your nose in the dirt."

"You and what other six cowpunchers? Rub my nose in the dirt! I'm sixty years old, but I can whip you on a sheepskin. Gittin' mad jist because I wondered—"

"Wondered, eh? Can'tcha drive and wonder at the same time, or can't you do two things at once?"

"Giddap!" snorted Comanche. "I never seen a pool player yet that—" The rest was lost in the rattle of the heavy stage as he turned swiftly to the right, and headed back for the main road.

Scotty stood there, scowling after Comanche, his jaw set belligerently.

"Neilan, Nolan, Nelson or Neal, eh? That's damn' funny."

"You no feel good t'day?" queried Mulligan.

Scotty gave the Chinese a blistering look and walked around to the front porch, where he sat down on the steps and tore up several cigaret papers before he succeeded in rolling one.

A few minutes later Buck Haskell rode in from Willow Wells and got off his horse at the porch.

"Jack Erb is still alive," he said. "Unconscious yet. As far as I can find out, everybody believes Jack was bushed. If Hartley knows Reese done the shootin', he ain't tellin' nobody."

Scotty spat dryly.

"That's the hell of it! Hartley don't tell *all* he knows. That *hombre* is dangerous, Buck. Look out for him."

"I'm not worryin' about him. Here's a funny deal, and I got it straight. Pink Lowry captured Bill McGill between town and the SP ranch last night. He took the tenderfoot to jail, roped to the saddle, tied the horse in front of the office and went in to tell Evans. And somebody blocked the door on him, took McGill away and nobody knows where he went nor who got him."

"Bill McGill, eh? Well, I'll be danged! So that blamed tenderfoot is still around here."

"Must be. And Pelliser fired Hartley and Stevens yesterday."

Scotty laughed with evident amusement.

"They're stayin' at the hotel," offered Buck. "I wonder why Pelliser fired 'em."

"I dunno. They told old man Noon that he was stealin' his cows."

"They did, eh?"

"Yeah. Well, if they ain't got no job, mebbe they won't stay long. If they do stay, it won't be long before me and that Hartley person locks horns."

"Don't never tackle him with your fists."

"Not me."

"Lee says he'll get him."

"Yea-a-a-ah, he will! Lee's as yaller as a sunflower. Reese said he'd get him, too. And Reese is hightailin' it for Cinnabar, lookin' behind himself at every straight piece of road. He's scared, if you ask me."

"I guess he is. How's your shoulder?"

"Pretty sore. He thinks he pulled a slick one on me, and I'll admit it was; but it don't end there. It's a wonder he didn't unjoint me."

Buck laughed shortly.

"Any man who can think that fast—well, I hope him and his pardner pull out of the Valley pretty soon."

"They will—or they won't never leave here," declared Scotty. "They ain't got me scared."

"Oh, I'm not scared, but I don't want no truck with 'em if it can be avoided."

Buck took his horse down to the stable, and Scotty sat down again. He had told Buck that he was not afraid, but there was a worried expression in his eyes.

"Neilan, Nolan, Nelson or Neal," he said softly. "I wish I knowed what it was all about. A telegram to the penitentiary, eh? Mebbe I better try and get Evans to talk."

He nodded slowly to himself, but suddenly his jaw sagged.

"Hartley was over at Santa Dolores, I'll bet! That's how he happens to be in Cinnabar. Damn' him, what's he up to, anyway?"

Scotty got to his feet, staring off across the hills.

"That's it," he muttered. "Hartley! Tryin' to spoil my deal, eh? Yeah, he will—not! I'll stop him if it's the last thing I do."

Buck and Smith, the scar faced cowboy, were coming up from the stable, heading for the bunkhouse. Scotty called to Smith, who came over to the porch.

"How good a detective are you, Smith?" he asked.

Smith grinned and shook his head.

"Not very good, I don't reckon."

"Prob'ly not. But here's what I want you to do. Go to town and kinda mix around with the folks. If you can git in with Hartley and Stevens, that'll be fine. Or even with the sheriff. Steer the talk around to Cinnabar and Santa Dolores. Mebbe they'll ask you some questions."

Smith scratched his stubbly hair and looked at Scotty.

"How could I answer their questions, Scotty? You've got to know—"

"Lie about it. Tell 'em—lemme see. Tell 'em you had a brother out in this country a long time ago, up around Santa Dolores. See the idea? Tell 'em you'd like to git some track of him."

"But I never—"

"Aw, lie, you damn' fool!"

"What's the joke, Scotty?"

Scotty shook his head.

"Mebbe it's a joke, and mebbe it ain't. Go ahead and lie to 'em. They'll talk, and you tell me what they talked about."

Smith nodded slowly.

"All right, I'll do it. I reckon I can rig me up a brother. I never had any, you see."

"Git yourself one to use. But find out all you can. And see what else you can find out about Bill McGill. He's back in the Valley again."

Smith laughed softly and shook his head.

"That feller is a wonder."

"He's a locoed tenderfoot, that's what he is. Did Buck tell you?"

"About the deputy sheriff losin' him? Yeah. Funny, wasn't it?"

"Lot's o' funny things happenin'."

Smith saddled his horse and rode to Willow Wells. The first bit of information he received was in the War Paint Saloon, where he went to get a drink. The bartender had the story from Hashknife, and he gave it to Smith for what it was worth.

"That feller Jack Erb was conscious for a little while, and I've heard that he told quite a few things to the sheriff. The doctor says he can't live, you know."

"Told about what?" asked Smith.

"I dunno. Kinda queer about him bein' bushwhacked, wasn't it? Mebbe he had somethin' to tell, eh?"

"Mebbe." Smith was quite positive

that this would interest Scotty. It might also interest other people, he thought.

THE town was quiet and there was no sign of Hashknife and Sleepy. Smith got into a small poker game to while away the time. The stage was due to pass the Diamond R ranch at about suppertime, and Scotty happened to be out at the road with a letter for Comanche when the stage came along.

"Kinda dusty, ain't it?" grunted Comanche as he reached down for the envelope.

"It is dusty, Comanche. Didja get the information you wanted?"

"What about?"

"That feller named Neilan, Nolan—"

"Oh, no," grinned Comanche. "Fact is, I never asked anybody else. Got a telegram for the sheriff, but the damn' thing's sealed. Mebbe that's the information. Well, see you later. Giddap, broncs!"

And Comanche wheeled away in a cloud of dust, springs creaking. Scotty walked back to the house, buckled on his chaps and headed for the stable.

"Goin' to town?" asked Buck Haskell.

"Right now, Buck."

"We're all goin' in after supper. This is Sat'day night and I'd like to draw a few dollars."

"See you in town, Buck."

"All right. We'll be in about seven o'clock."

Buck went on to the house, where the boys were washing up for supper.

"He'll meet us in town," explained Buck.

"Must be in a awful rush to go before supper," said Lee.

"All on aidge," said Barney East, his face muffled in a towel. "Since old man Noon had him arrested for rustlin', Scotty has been keyed up—and that billiard cue business didn't calm him down a bit. I've jist got a hunch that there'll be powder smoke in the old town tonight."

"I hope not," grunted Buck. "I got a cactus spine in my right foot and I can't run very fast."

"Powder smoke or no powder smoke, I'm goin' to play some poker," declared Barney. "I've got some easy money comin', and I'm goin' to make me a bankroll or go busted right."

Smith did not see Hashknife or the sheriff until the stage rolled in; it stopped for a moment at the sheriff's office to deliver the telegram, then went on to the stage station. The sheriff opened the telegram, read it and handed it to Hashknife. It was from the State penitentiary, signed by the warden.

NEAL SERVED FULL SENTENCE BELIEVED RINGLEADER IN ATTEMPT TO DELIVER TWENTY MEN TEN YEARS AGO WAS BAD PRISONER NO FURTHER INFORMATION.

—TAYLOR

Hashknife swore softly and handed the telegram back to the sheriff.

"My mistake was in not askin' how long a sentence Neal got. But this might be enough."

Smith came up to them, sauntering along, and Hashknife pocketed the telegram.

"How are you this evenin', Smith?" asked the sheriff.

"Pretty good; how are you? Any news about Jack Erb?"

"Not since this afternoon," said Hashknife. "He was conscious for a few minutes—long enough to talk a little."

"And he shore talked," said the sheriff, backing up Hashknife's lie.

Smith smiled to himself, wondering what Erb had said. Not for a moment did he suspect that Hashknife had circulated this information for an especial purpose. Even the sheriff did not know what it was for.

"Was either of you men ever up around Santa Dolores years ago?" asked Smith seriously.

"I never was," said the sheriff. Hashknife's gray eyes twinkled a little.

"Why I asked you was because I had a brother out in this country a long time ago, and I kinda lost track of him. He wrote me letters from Santa Dolores, and I kinda thought somebody might remember him."

"Named Smith?" asked Hashknife.

Smith snorted softly.

"Naturally. First name Henry."

"You might ask Caliente Smith," suggested Hashknife. "He was up in that part of the country a long time ago and he might remember a Smith, bein' as that's his name, too."

"I might ask him. Thanks for the suggestion."

Smith went back up the street and Hashknife looked after him, a curious expression in his eyes. He turned to the sheriff.

"That was kinda funny, wasn't it? Comin' right after that telegram?"

"Yeah, it was."

They walked up the street and met Comanche, who had turned his team over to the stable. Comanche evidently saw nothing wrong in having read the telegram entrusted to his care.

"Didja git an answer to your telegram?" he asked. "The one I sent out for you this mornin'? Quick work, eh? Send her out and git an answer inside of a couple hours. I stopped at the Diamond R on my way down, and I happened to remember that the McGowans used to be up around Santa Dolores. I asked Scotty if he remembered anybody by them names, but I guess he didn't."

"You showed him my telegram?"

"Didn't show it to him—no."

"Read it to him?"

"No, I jist asked him about a feller of that name. He didn't know any."

Hashknife sighed deeply and shook his head as they walked on.

"That's a lesson," he said to the sheriff. "Always seal your telegrams."

"That's right. But there's no harm done, is there?"

"I reckon not. Mebbe it's best that way. Let's go and eat."

"All right. I'll lock up the office. Pink's gone out to the Pelliser ranch again, I reckon. Love must be a awful thing, Hartley."

"No question about it. It shore ruins a good officer."

"Then it won't hurt Pink; he ain't a good one."

By the time Scotty reached town Smith was back in a poker game, which had built up considerably. It being Saturday night, the cowboys would all be in, especially if they were able to draw some of their wages. Scotty came to the War Paint and hung around until he was able to attract Smith's attention. Smith shook his head at Scotty, indicating that he had no information. He had forgotten that Erb was said to have talked. Anyway, that was common knowledge, and Scotty might already have heard about it. Scotty had a drink and went to the restaurant, where he found Hashknife and Evans.

Ignoring them, Scotty sat down at a table as far removed as possible, and ordered a meal. Thursday and Sid Brayton came in, yelped gleefully and sat down with Evans and Hashknife.

"Didn't wait for supper," they said. "Wanted some ham and aigs. Hey! Sing Lee! Two order soup and two order ham and aigs, straight up."

Scotty scowled at them as they talked softly, wondering what they were discussing. With Hashknife and Sleepy fired from the outfit, and with Sid and Thursday in town, it meant that Mary and Steve were alone at the ranch.

Scotty was still eating when they left the restaurant and went to the War Paint, where they found Sleepy playing pool with Chris Halvorsen. Chris was too easy for Sleepy, who asked Hashknife to play a game with him; but Hashknife shook his head shortly and Sleepy knew his lanky partner had something on his mind.

The rest of the Diamond R outfit showed up, but paid no attention to Hashknife. They wanted liquor and cards—not trouble. The sheriff sat down to watch another poker game, and in a few minutes Scotty came in. He gave the men some money and they went straight to the bar.

Hashknife saw the bartender talking to

Barney East, and the Diamond R cowboys seemed deeply interested. They turned and spoke to Scotty, who listened to what Barney told him. Hashknife had no way of knowing what was said, but he felt sure the bartender had told Barney that Jack Erb had talked. Scotty nodded shortly and they went back to their drinks. Hashknife watched Scotty closely now. He stood there under the hanging lamp, with tobacco smoke wreathing around his face, his eyes half closed. He caught Smith's eye and the scar faced man cashed in his few chips and drew out of the game. Hashknife had never practised lip reading, but he watched the two men closely as Scotty asked Smith a question. And Smith's answer was very plain.

"Yeah, I knew about it."

Hashknife caught it easily—as also he caught Scotty's reply.

"You fool, why didn't you tell me?"

Smith shrugged his shoulders. Scotty was whispering swiftly, too swiftly for Hashknife to catch any of it. Scotty was vehement. His eyes swept the room and his lips said—

"They're all here now."

Smith glanced around, and Hashknife saw his eyes pick out Thursday and Sid Brayton. He nodded quickly. Scotty said something more, but Smith did not reply. Scotty turned quickly and left the saloon without saying anything to his men. Smith glanced around sharply, went slowly to the doorway, where he stood for several moments, idly looking around. Then he slipped outside and headed for the hitch-rack.

Hashknife touched Sleepy on the arm and they went outside, not appearing to be in a hurry. Once out of the lights, Hashknife ran swiftly toward the livery stable, with Sleepy at his heels. The stablekeeper gawped at them as they saddled quickly, mounted almost on the run and fairly shot through the wide front doors.

"I reckon," said the stablekeeper thoughtfully, "I ought to run and tell the sheriff that them two gents has either killed somebody or robbed the bank—but I won't. It's none of my business, and I like 'em both."

CHAPTER XIX

THE END OF THE TRAIL

PINK ate supper at the Pelliser ranch that evening. He wanted to talk with Mary about Bill McGill, but Steve stayed close to them, and it did not seem that he was going to get a chance. Thursday Adams and Sid Brayton drew a little money from Steve and went to town before supper. Pink had hoped Steve Pelliser would decide to visit town that evening, but the rancher seemed content to stay home. Steve had changed much in a short time. He did not smile any more, and the lines of his face had deepened. Mary was worried.

"Funny about Uncle Hoddy havin' Scotty McGowan arrested for misbrandin' cattle," observed Pink as they ate supper. "That's the trouble when two outfits brand the same spot. It ended all right, but Uncle Hoddy ain't satisfied. Too much chance for the Diamond R to slip that six pointed star on some HN beef. I don't blame him."

Steve remained silent, his eyes troubled.

"And the bushwhackin' of Jack Erb," continued Pink. "Queer thing, if you didn't know Jack Erb. He's crooked. Mebbe that ain't the right thing to say about a dyin' man—yeah, the doctor says he can't live—but I know Jack's got a bad rep. Somebody slammed him with a hot bullet, that's a cinch.

"I'll betcha Ed Reese knowed who done the shootin', but he pulled his freight pretty quick. I told Dud he was a fool to let Ed get away, 'cause it was a ten to one bet that Ed knowed who fired the shot. I had kind of a hunch that Jack had tangled with Hashknife Hartley, but Hashknife don't pack a .30-30. Hashknife had a run-in with them over in High Grade before he came here—helpin' out Bill McGill over there."

"There has been a lot of trouble around

here lately," said Mary softly. "Willow Valley has always been so peaceful."

"Well, it ain't peaceful no more. Hashknife and Scotty almost smoked up the War Paint last night. Scotty got drunk and tried to bust up a pool game, but Hashknife upset him with a billiard cue. I dunno just how it was done, but I reckon it was kinda slick. Hurt Scotty's right shoulder. Scotty shot off his face a little, and then Hashknife shore called him plenty. Them two are goin' to throw lead one of these days."

"I'll bet on Hashknife," said Mary.

"All depends on the breaks. They've both got plenty nerve."

"What are they quarrelin' over?" asked Steve, showing a little interest.

"I dunno. Somethin' has made Scotty dislike Hashknife. Mebbe he's scared of Hashknife. He knows that Hashknife told Hoddy Noon about the misbranded cattle. Or—" Pink corrected himself quickly—"the cattle he thought was misbranded."

"What is your personal opinion of Hashknife?" asked Steve.

"He's got me guessin'," laughed Pink. "I don't *sabe* him. Dud was tellin' me about a telegram Hashknife sent to the penitentiary, askin' for information about a man who robbed somebody in Santa Dolores twenty years ago. Feller named Nolan, or somethin' like that."

"He was at Santa Dolores," said Mary. "He told me he had been there."

"What does he want that information for?" queried Steve.

"I dunno. Queer, ain't it?"

They got up from the table and went into the front room. Pink was wishing that Steve would decide to make himself scarce, because he wanted to ask Mary if she knew Bill McGill was back again. Steve filled his pipe and smoked moodily, taking no part in the conversation. Finally Steve arose and went up the stairs to his own room.

"I wanted to tell you somethin'," said Pink cautiously, "and I didn't want your Dad to hear it. Bill McGill is back again."

"How do you know?" asked Mary quickly.

"I found him between here and Willow Wells last night."

Mary knew it, but she did not tell Pink.

"I knew you folks was through with him, so I tied him to the horse and took him back to town. But—" Pink smiled sourly—"somebody swiped him from me. Dud thinks I'm crazy when I insist I had him."

"Why, who took him?"

"I dunno, but I've got a hunch that Hashknife had a hand in it. Where he took Bill McGill, I've no idea. I ain't sure he took him, of course."

"It is all very mysterious," said Mary, masking a smile.

"I should say it is. If I ever get my hands on—"

The scrape of footsteps sounded on the front porch and the door rattled under heavy knocking.

Mary stepped over and opened the door. It was Scotty McGowan, panting just a little, his face drawn and serious. He stepped inside, paying no attention to Mary or Pink.

"I want to see Steve," he said harshly.

"He's upstairs," said Mary. "I'll call him if you—"

"I'll go up to see him," growled Scotty, and started for the stairs; but Steve had heard him and was coming down. Scotty stopped at the bottom of the steps. Pink got to his feet, wondering what was wrong with Scotty.

Steve came down, looking curiously at Scotty.

"What's wrong?" asked Steve.

"I can't tell you here."

Scotty looked at Pink but did not speak. He turned to Steve.

"Better go outside, I reckon."

The door was wide open and as they turned, Smith, the man with the scarred face, was in the doorway, hunched forward, a leer on his crooked lips.

"What do you want?" growled Scotty, his hand dropping back toward the butt of his gun.

Perhaps Scotty had no intention of

drawing a gun. He and Smith had never had any trouble. Again, Scotty might have been startled to see Smith, whom he had left in Willow Wells.

AT ANY rate, as Scotty's hand swung back, Smith's right hand shot forward with a big black Colt. The room shuddered from the explosion of the .45 cartridge. Scotty jerked half around, clawed at the empty air and went down in a heap as Smith sprang forward, the gun cocked again.

It swayed toward Pink, whose hands went up, jerked back to Steve and steadied.

The leer was gone from Smith's face now. In its place was the drawn mask of hate, the half closed eyes of a snake.

"Pray, you damn' thief!" said Smith. "Pray quick, if you know a prayer!"

Smith came a little closer, his knuckles white on the grip of that big gun, his teeth bared in a snarl.

"Pray!" he whispered tensely. "Say it quick, you lyin' thief!"

"Smith!"

The word snapped and Smith whirled like a trapped wolf, shooting as he whirled. Two reports sounded as one as Hashknife's gun flicked flame through the smoke of Smith's first shot.

Smith tried to lift the gun, but it seemed to weigh a ton. His arm sagged down, the gun fell from his fingers and he went to his knees, sprawling, still reaching for it.

Pink still had his hands up. Mary was swaying, her eyes shut, when Hashknife caught her by the shoulder.

"For God's sake get this girl out of here, Pink!" he snapped.

Pink jerked back to realization. There did not seem anything incongruous in ordering a deputy sheriff to leave the scene of a shooting. Pink took Mary by the arm and they both stumbled out through the kitchen.

"My God!" breathed Steve, relaxing a little.

Hashknife knelt down and turned Smith over. He was conscious and seemed to know he was at the end of things.

"Fell down on the job, didn't I?" he said jerkily.

"You did, Neal," said Hashknife.

The scar faced man smiled thinly.

"Knew me, eh?"

"Guessed you, Neal."

"But why did you want to kill me?" asked Steve wonderingly.

"Why? Damn' you, you and Hart stole all that money! You never made good your promise, you dirty thief. You kept the kids, too. Oh, I heard from Denver. You never sent a penny. I tried to break jail and get you both, but they stopped us and I served all my time. I killed Hart and robbed his bank, and I was goin' to get you."

Steve's face was white, drawn.

"You—you are Spike?"

"What's left of him—yes."

"You—you didn't die that—"

"Damn' you, of course I didn't die. They gave me twenty years, and you got the gold."

"We didn't, Spike. No, no! We never got the gold. We never had a cent to send to Denver; never had money enough to send the kids, so we kept 'em. Mary—she's one. She don't know it. Ed sent the other to—"

"I know," interrupted Neal. "They—Scotty led the lynchers that night, but I was ahead of 'em and turned him loose. I—I came out here to kill you, and found him in the dugout; so I stole a horse and took him out of the Valley—but the fool came back. You say you—never got the gold?"

"Not a cent of it."

Neal closed his eyes and they thought he was gone. Steve was trembling, his lips twitching, as he looked down at Neal, who opened his eyes.

"It's all right, Steve," he said painfully. "Clears everythin'. Sorry about Hart. The money is in straw-tick in my bunk. The kids—wasn't mine. Their father was killed in a blast—mother died when girl was born. I—I promised to take care of 'em—stole to do it. They're good stock—mavericks, both of 'em. Jim McGowan was sheriff—he knew. Scotty knew. I—

I talked about you—when I was sick before the trial. Scotty didn't know me. They're stealin' your cattle because they know you don't dare kick."

Neal stopped for breath, his eyelids growing heavy.

"Sorry," he panted. "Lived a tough life, but it's all right. Mavericks, both of 'em, but good blood. Jist mav—"

Hashknife got slowly to his feet and put a hand on Steve's shoulder. They were looking at each other when a voice broke the stillness.

"What was the shooting all about this evening?"

It was Bill McGill. He was standing in the doorway, his eyes wide as he looked through the smoke at the two men on the floor. Steve stared at him, wonderingly. Sleepy stepped over and looked at Scotty, shook his head sadly and leaned against the wall, rolling a cigaret. Pink and Mary came back, coughing a little in the smoke.

"I—I couldn't keep her out any longer," said Pink.

"It's too bad you wasn't here," said Hashknife. "Smith confessed to the killin' of Ed Hart and the robbery of the bank."

"He did? Can you imagine that? What was the matter with him? Why did he want to kill Steve?"

"Loco," said Hashknife softly. "I reckon that kickin' he got at the War Paint hitch-rack that night busted somethin' in his head. He kinda blamed Steve 'cause Steve owned the horse, I reckon. Anyway, it's all cleared up. I dunno why he killed Scotty, unless it was 'cause Scotty tried to pull a gun."

"Can you imagine that?" breathed Pink. "And Bill McGill is free?"

"Free as the air. It was a verbal confession, but there was three of us to hear it. He even told where he hid the money."

"You say I—that there is no charge against me?" queried Bill McGill.

Hashknife shook his head quickly.

"You're free, Bill."

"Thank you kindly. I'm really all fed up on dugouts and having guns thrust in my ribs. Still, it was experience. I suppose there is no reason for my staying longer?"

"Bill," said Steve, his voice trembling a little, "would you like to stay in this country and learn the cattle business?"

"I—er—well, I don't know. I suppose a man must learn something."

"The bank has a mortgage on the Diamond R," said Steve. "I think I can buy it out—the mortgage. There are no McGowans left. Perhaps I can buy the ranch at a reasonable figure; and if you want a job, Bill—"

"Thanks, Mr. Pelliser. But no one has told me what the shooting was all about, don't you see?"

"Bill," replied Hashknife softly, "when you're in Arizona, don't ask questions."

"And I think," said Steve slowly, "that we'll have a marriage here at the ranch in a short time."

He looked at Mary and Pink, who looked at each other foolishly.

"That's gug—great!" blurted Pink. "I—I think I better go and get the sheriff now."

"Take it easy," smiled Hashknife. "I'll send him out."

He and Sleepy headed for the front door, and Steve followed them outside, where they mounted their horses.

"Hashknife," he said softly, "I don't know what to say. Man, you've—"

"That's all right, Steve. Everythin' is cleared up."

"Cleared up? Man, the weight of the world is off my shoulders. If I get that Diamond R ranch, won't you run it for me? I need you both."

"I'd like to, Steve, but it ain't in us to stay still very long. We've both been wonderin' what's on the other side of the hill. Take care of Bill McGill. He's all right—jist ignorant from ingrown education. See you later."

THEY rode away, knee to knee, heading down the moonlit road over which they had ridden so furiously.

"Funny case, Sleepy," said Hashknife. "Had me whipped for a long time. I went to work on the theory that Pink didn't kill McGowan. I studied it a long time, and this is how I figured it out. McGowan wanted to marry Mary Pelliser. Steve kicked. They were down near the stable that night when McGowan told Steve he knew he was one of the men who helped Spike Neal rob that stage. It meant that Steve was in McGowan's power. Steve shot McGowan. They shot together, Steve's body maskin' the flash of his own gun from Pink, who was in line with 'em.

"Pink's shot never hit anythin'. The Chinaman saw three flashes. He didn't admit it, but I knew danged well he saw 'em. Pelliser loves Mary, and he'd fight to keep her from knowin' that she wasn't his daughter. As soon as I worked out that theory—of course, I didn't know what McGowan had on Pelliser—I went to work on the killin' of Hart. Bill McGill was out of the question. He fell down and accidently fired that shot.

"I knew that one man turned Bill loose ahead of the lynchers, and my job was to puzzle out who that one man might be. It was somebody who knew of the proposed lynchin', and I figured Scotty was in on that deal. Then came the bank robbery. One masked man. The letter Bill McGill had was signed Ed. That was the name of Hart, who was murdered.

"Caliente Smith told me about the stage robbery near Santa Dolores, in which one man was shot and the rest got away. Then came the deal of the misbranded calf, the misbranded cows, and Steve Pelliser provin' an alibi for Scotty McGowan.

"You see, the murder of Hart looked like a grudge proposition. He didn't have any enemies in the Valley. Hart and Pelliser had been pardners for years. They fitted in nice. I didn't know where the two kids came in, but it seems that Neal intrusted them to Hart and Pelliser. I had to have a man who hated both Steve and Ed Hart. Smith was the only stranger, so I kinda looked him over. Nobody would recognize him with that face. He came here to kill both men, but that kickin' kinda delayed the deal.

"The telegram made me more sure that Smith was Neal. I circulated the report that Jack Erb had told a few things, and watched to see how Scotty took the news. Well, he headed straight for Pelliser—to demand protection in case Erb told too many things. He figured that only Steve and Mary were at the ranch, and it was a good time to talk with Steve. And when Smith, or Neal, followed him real quick, I figured that there would be somethin' doin' at the Pelliser ranch."

"And Smith was jist a locoed nut, who shot Scotty McGowan, 'cause Scotty reached for a gun; and then tried to kill Steve, 'cause Steve's horse kicked him that night," said Sleepy.

"That's right. Fact is stranger than fiction, don'tcha think?"

"It shore is in this case. Man, that was a snappy finish."

They rode into the town and found the sheriff at his office. He had been looking for them. In a few words Hashknife told him what had happened at the Pelliser ranch, and Evans almost fell out of his chair.

"Smith confessed to the murder of Hart and robbin' the bank before he died? Can you beat that? And he killed Scotty McGowan? My golly, that's shore a shock. Say! I better get the coroner and pile out there as fast as I can. Will you tell Scotty's gang?"

"Shore. You can go right ahead, Dud."

The sheriff ran for the stable while Hashknife and Sleepy crossed the street to the War Paint, where everything was in full swing. Buck Haskell was at the bar, talking with Barney East, as Hashknife came up to him.

Buck looked him over suspiciously, but Hashknife's slow smile was reassuring. He said softly:

"Haskell, get your other two men and meet me outside. I've got some news that might interest you all."

"What do you mean?" asked Haskell tensely, while Barney shifted his right arm a little.

"Just a little news you might like to know ahead of time."

Buck looked straight at Hashknife, but the level gray eyes never shifted.

"Get 'em, Barney," said Buck softly.

Sam Hall was playing twenty-one and Nick Lee was watching the whirring roulette; but they followed Barney East, suspiciously, wonderingly, and the six men walked a short distance away from the front door.

"Scarface Smith killed Scotty McGowan at the Pelliser ranch less than an hour ago," said Hashknife. "The sheriff and coroner are headin' that way right now. Smith talked a little before he died. I'm tellin' you this for what it's worth and before too many folks know about it. It's none of my business, but if I was you, boys, I'd see that Willow Wells was a long, long ways behind me by this time tomorrow night."

The four men said nothing for several moments. Finally Buck Haskell spoke softly:

"Is this on the square, Hartley? Did Smith kill Scotty?"

"They're both dead, Haskell."

"That's a square deal on your part," said Barney East. "I'm not lookin' for anybody to prove anythin' to me. Thank you."

"Same here," nodded Lee. "I've been here too long, anyway."

Silently they turned, went to the hitch-rack, mounted their horses and rode down the street.

"Undesirable citizens," said Hashknife. "We couldn't pin anythin' on 'em; so I decided to scare 'em out of the country."

They crossed the street, heading for the sheriff's office, where their horses were tied; but a single-rig, with one man in it, drew up in front of a general merchandise store and they crossed over to see who it was. The man was rather short, stout, with a Semitic cast of countenance; he wore a derby hat.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said. "My, that is a dusty trip. I came from Newton. Stine is my name. I represent Nathan and Stine, makers of first class men's clothing. I come ever so often to here because my headquarters are in Phoenix. I make clothes to your order cheaper—"

"Oh, yes," said Hashknife pleasantly. "You've been here before?"

"Certainly. Last time I sold suits to the sheriff and his deputy."

"Oh, yea-a-ah. Here's a tip, Mr. Stine. The deputy is goin' to get married in a few days and I know danged well—say, he's been wantin' to see you ever since he got his last suit."

"Fine! He spoke about my goods, eh? Can't I see you boys tomorrow?"

"All depends on where you are," grinned Hashknife.

They went on to the little hitch-rack, where they climbed on their horses and rode back to the hotel to pay their bill and get their war-bags. As they came from the hotel they met Stine.

"I've got some nice fast colors in new weaves," he said hopefully.

"You'll need 'em, when you meet that deputy," said Hashknife. "The faster the better."

Five minutes later the lights of Willow Wells had faded out as they headed westward, riding knee to knee through the fragrant sage. The moon shone down, silvering the points of the distant ranges.

"I wonder what we'll find over there," said Sleepy.

"More hills, I suppose."

"That's great."

And so they passed from the Valley as quietly as they had come. Their work was completed and they were going over over the hill, leaving Willow Wells to work out its own salvation, and to wonder what became of them.

As Pink said, two weeks later—

"Dud, you can stand up with me and Mary, but don't kid yourself—the best man pulled out of here *that* night."

The sheriff nodded slowly.

"Queer feller, that Hashknife Hartley. Never told much. I'm still wonderin' about that telegram and what a man named Neal had to do with it. Why did every one of the Diamond R punchers disappear? Why did a bunch of men take Bill McGill out of jail and not lynch him? When you come right down to it, I don't know much."

"That's what I've been tryin' to tell you ever since I've knowed you, Dud. I'm with you, as far as that goes. But where ignorance is bliss, why git all het up. The only thing that worries me now—will Stine git that new suit to me in time? I swore I'd kill him if he ever came back to this town, but I felt so happy over the way things broke, I almost hugged him. Me and Mary are goin' to run the Diamond R, and you'll have to hire a new deputy."

"Yeah, and you told Bill McGill to apply for the job! That maverick!"

"What didja tell him, Dud?"

"What did I tell him?" snorted the sheriff. "I told him he didn't have brains enough to come in out of the rain. And he said there was very little rain in this part of Arizona, and as far as being ignorant was concerned, did Mr. Lowry have any brains?"

"And then what did you say?" asked Pink, grinning.

"Well, I said a deputy had to be able to smoke cigarets and cuss a little, and the son of a gun pulled out the makin's and—who learned that maverick to cuss?"

Pink threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"And then what, Dud?"

"I gave him the job."

THE END

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

We Don't Vouch For This!

DOWN FLORIDA WAY (as my old friend Larry St. John of the Chicago *Tribune* used to say) the rattlers run to size. He killed a number over six feet in length, "with heads as big as beef hearts." And then one of them killed him.

Down in Jackson, Mississippi, they'll show you the daddy of all rattlers. I don't remember just how many rattles and a button he had—perhaps twenty-two. He measures one-half inch short of seven feet. Fresh killed, they tell me he weighed ninety-one pounds. Taxidermied (is that a word?) he tapers both ways from a middle that is about the size of a ten gallon shinny keg. Any one bitten by that snake . . . but why go into the Chamber of Horrors?

Personally I don't believe in this remedy; I'd rather take a chance on a knife, permanganate of potash, and two-three pints of good whisky. But I'm passing it along for what it may possibly be worth.

This is my first entry into the circle except as a spectator; though I have been a reader of *Adventure* for some fifteen years or so. I never had anything to say before as I am only the common hothouse variety of adventurer, taking mine out through the other fellow.

This noon I was talking with a lady friend of mine about snakes. She had been brought up in the backwoods of Wisconsin in a lumber camp and had to play with Indian children, as there were no other kind in the neighborhood. And this is the Indian remedy she gave me for rattlesnake bite.

Kill the snake as quickly as possible, cut a piece six or eight inches long out of the middle of the body, slice in two so that the raw flesh is exposed and apply to the wound. It will stick like a leech and draw all the poison out. Of course it has to be done right away to be effective.

I do not remember to have read this remedy in *Adventure* or anywhere else and can not vouch for it; but the lady assured me that she had seen it done successfully. So take it for what it is worth.

With best wishes for everybody.

—F. E. FARRAR

A Critic Was Hove To

WHEN a critic of the nautical detail in a story by Bill Adams complained that Bill, while shortening sail on a four-masted barque, had taken in the fore-topgallantsail before he took in the mizzen-topgallantsail—that *placed* the critic with Bill! The critic was judging the sea and the immensity thereof by his own limited experience on nothing but a full-rigger.

In the following candid epistle Bill gives us a hint as to how the word *shipshape* has come to mean what it does.

It is very easy for a man writing a sea story to make a slip, or to make what to some of his readers may seem to be one. Years ago a man wrote me a very sarcastic letter, informing me that I knew mighty little about ships and that the best thing that I could do would be to cease trying to write of them. Because in one of my stories I had, while shortening sail, taken in the fore-topgallantsail before I took in the mizzen-topgallantsail, his sarcasm knew no bounds. That placed him with me at once. The vessel of which I had written had chanced to be a four-mast barque. In a four-mast barque one takes in the fore-topgallantsail before one takes in the mizzen. In a three-mast full-rigger the mizzen would be the first to be taken in. My irate critic was some fellow who had presumably made a voyage or two in a full-rigger, but knew nothing at all of the handling of a four-mast barque.

Those of us who have been through the mill know that there are a vast number of "tricks to the trade." Thus we were not overly given to criticism. Things were done differently in different ships, by different skippers. Only yesterday I read of a vessel being hove to to ride out a blow under canvas such as I had never before heard of a vessel being hove to under. The knowledge of the writer being quite beyond question; I have at this late date learned something.

As an example of the need for caution in criticism I will mention an incident that befell me long ago. When I went up for my second mate's ticket I was examined by an old gray haired retired square-rigger skipper who had known the full clippers in the days of their glory. After he had satisfied himself as to my knowledge of navigation, after he had gone into my seamanship in the manner of a terrier going after a rat, after he had done his utmost to trip me up in the thirty-two articles of the Rule of the Road for ships at sea, he told me to name the sails on the foremast. That in all conscience was simple enough. Indeed I was much surprised that he should ask me anything so simple. Having named the square sails, I named the head sails; starting with the fore-topmast staysail and ending with the jib topsail. When I mentioned the jib topsail a look of scorn came to his face.

"What do you mean by a jib topsail?" he dourly demanded.

He had never heard of, never seen, a jib topsail in a square rigger. Yet for four years I had sailed under a Blue Nose skipper who would no more have thought of doing without a jib topsail than he would have thought of mixing water with his whisky. But I do not remember ever having seen another ship that carried one. The gray headed examiner was much interested while I explained how a jib topsail set. His last words to me, spoken as he handed me the coveted little slip of paper, were—

"Don't ever get to thinking that you know all there is to be known about ships." A mate under whom I sailed as a boy once gave me similar advice. It had come to him, he informed me, from the skipper under whom he himself first went to sea.

"When a man gets to thinking that he knows all there is to be known about ships, then some ship is liable to fool him."

Not long ago I came across a sea book which dealt mainly with the ships of the period in which I went to sea. I found it enjoyable enough until I came across mention of an old ship of my own. Then I laid it down. The name of my old ship was wrongly spelt! A sailor likes accuracy. From his first moment aboard, accuracy was trained into the youngster who went to sea in the days of sail. No sloppy work was permitted. Many a splendid ship has been lost through a moment's carelessness.

AS AN example of the accuracy demanded I will again mention the gray headed ex-clipper captain who long ago examined me for my second mate's ticket. When taking one's examination in navigation one worked out one problem at a time and having finished it took it to the examiner's desk. If the answer was correct he gave the applicant the next problem. If it was wrong he said, "Go back to sea for six months."

Since each time that one took an answer to his desk one dreaded those words the navigation examination was somewhat of a long drawn agony. Being told to go back to sea for six months was practically the same thing as being told to go back to sea for a year, for at that period there were few sailing voyages of less than a year's duration. One who had served through a four-year apprenticeship in the hope of becoming an officer at the end of it had no liking for spending a year in the forecastle, before the mast as an able seaman.

I contrived to get safely through all my problems till the last—the longitude by chronometer. Having glanced at my answer to that last problem, the examiner said:

"I'll give you one more chance. Go back to your desk."

My heart went cold. I returned to my desk, worked the problem over and over, and could find no mistake in my figures. While I sat despairingly poring over them, the examiner left his seat and came and stood behind me. Minutes dragged by. I knew that I was doomed. But at last, without speaking, the aged captain laid a finger tip on my paper, at the end of my answer. Then suddenly I discovered my error. I had worked the problem out to only four, instead of, as required, to five places of decimals. To set down the last numeral was the work of an instant. My navigation examination was safely over! Yet had the examiner not been unusually good natured that day I should most certainly have had to go back to sea for a year merely because I had carelessly omitted to set down one inconsequential numeral.

"A place for everything, and everything in its place," the boatswain used often to say to us young apprentices.

As I said before, it is very easy for a man writing a sea story to make a slip, or to seem, to his readers, to make one. And I have no complaint to make on that score. As was the case with the examiner, the reader wants, and is entitled to, accuracy.

"If you're going to do a thing, do it right," as the old Blue Nose used to say to us lads of the half-deck.

—BILL ADAMS

"Better 'Ole"

COMRADE SYLVESTER can hardly hear himself think for the shot and shell of the Alabama hunting season—but he does take time off to share his private pine knot fire with us.

We can think of nothing pleasanter than a blazing fire, a rainy day, and a few copies of Comrade Sylvester's old magazines to take the edge off of Milton and Browning.

We're having a genuine Alabama dew this morning. The rain is falling in sheets and pillow cases, knocking the petals off the remaining roses and pounding the flaming salvias into the ground while the wind is bowing the yellow cosmos and shaking the chrysanthemums into parti-colored masses of dirty refuse—but that isn't what I started to say.

This is a wild and dangerous country for even an old adventurer like myself. Nearly every morning I am awakened by a terrific bombardment from the swamp a half mile away where the noble huntsmen are waging perilous war against the savage gray squirrel. One would not think to watch the graceful beauties that they were such a menace to humanity as to justify the expenditure of powder and shot. And as a table luxury the meat of the lank and tendonous little animals is about on a par with that of a cat; and how much more noble to kill a cat and spare the mocking birds from having their tails torn out, the bluebirds from being eaten in toto and the lovely warblers from being frightened into the deepest recesses of the woods.

Following the morning blasts come the daily engagements with the ferocious mourning dove, when shot and shell fly through the air, endangering the motorist in the road, the pedestrians in the cowpaths which serve us for sidewalks and now and then killing a poor old horse turned out to graze, or puncturing the udder of an innocent bystanding cow.

Later, the patriotic hunter with a big dog showing more intelligence than his owner scouts the terrain, seeking the poisonous Bob White, whose only offense lies in his friendly attitude and his deep anxiety to feed in your dooryard and worry you with his heartening morning cries, his spirited after notes. But now and then we are protected from this terror of the fields by an enterprising traveler from the neighboring metropolis who shoots our enemy almost from our doorstep where we had tried to placate him by a tribute of the diet he loves so well. But that isn't what I started to say.

Now to protect myself from this temporary warfare I seek my "Better 'Ole" and let the waves of destruction flow over me. O, yes, there was a time when I fought in this guerrilla warfare as do my friends, but now with seventy or more years behind me I like to sit by my fireside, read and criticize my neighbors.

Do you know that having read the announcement of the forthcoming very first copy of *Adventure* I waited with no little impatience to see what some of the men whom I knew would produce in the way of a good magazine? Do you know that with very few exceptions I have seen every number of it and read a surprisingly large number of its pages? Well it's a fact. I even survived those lean and hungry years when it fell into the hands of the futurists. But here we are again barely able to write a word of appreciation because the pine knots blaze in the fireplace, and a copy of one of the later issues of *Adventure* lies open on my desk.

You have some good writers who are a relief from a lifetime of Milton, Shakespeare and Browning; who know their stuff and have imagination enough to put it over forcibly and wit enough to make it attractive. Have I any suggestions to make, any criticisms to offer? What am I that I should carp and whine? If I do not find some of your pages interesting I suppose others do, and there is enough to give me great enjoyment. Why should I measure everything by my little foot rule?

If I were not trying to be a model of decency in this charming community I should say you are running a goddarn good magazine with a world of interesting things in it. Women and sex stuff? Nobody dislikes the women; they are our mothers, our sweethearts, our wives and our daughters. The dear creatures do everything, run everything and are everything. They come dear, but we must have 'em. But who wants their skirts trailing over the pages and taking our attention from the stirring tales of daring-do. We know where to get the erotic stuff when we want it and can find psychic disturbances in plenty of other magazines.

Let us continue to shoot 'em as they come with lightning draws of the .45; let us make 'em walk the plank, and see a few more redskins bite the dust. Selah—and that's what I wanted to say.

—C. H. SYLVESTER

THE BRIDE OF LAM 'ER MORE

Prognosticatin' down the street, Old Sandy Rue and Stutterin' Pete
  Was havin' trouble with their feet, the same not trackin' well.
Says Sandy, "When you try to walk your feet git tangled like your talk."
  Pete worked his jaw for half a block, then says, "You g-go to hell!"

The pizen riz in Sandy Rue. Says he, polite, "The same to you!
  But that there face you're lookin' through would make a heifer cough."
Says Pete, "Them whiskers on *your* face don't leave you any washin' place,
  But mebbe dirt ain't no disgrace." And then the lid blew off.

Old Sandy swung for Stutterin's jaw, but Pete was lightnin' on the draw,
  A crash, a flash, and Sandy saw his whiskers was aflame.
That bullet, meant for Sandy's head, went whizzin' down the street instead.
  It bumped a lady out of bed. And Nellie was her name.

Now Nell was knowed most everywhere as mighty tough but on the square;
  With freckled face and sandy hair and boots and gun and such,
She wern't no parlor ornament, but dressed and acted like a gent;
  And both her legs was kinda bent from ridin' broncs too much.

She come a-foggin' down the lane a-steppin' high and talkin' plain,
  Like thunder just before a rain, prospectin' for the fool
What sp'iled her mattrass, broke her rest and seared her—somewhere in the West—
  While Pete and Sandy done their best to bust the Golden Rule.

It wern't till later on that night folks savvied why *she* j'ined the fight.
  She stomped Pete's features out of sight. She made Old Sandy sing;
She yanked his whiskers out complete; then took the limp remains of Pete,
  And steered him wobblin' down the street—to buy a weddin' ring.

The jump is took, the bride is won, and mostly, then, the story 's done,
  But life for Pete had just begun—which same ain't told in books.
For every time Pete showed his face his nose was in a different place,
  His Nell she set a rattlin' pace a-changin' of his looks.

One night our feelins got a jar, we-all a-standin' at the bar,
  When Pete come like a shootin' star, hair flyin' and no hat,
Fetched up and p'inted to his head, which I admire was plenty red.
  And shoved his jaw in place and said, "Yes, fellers, s-she done that!"

Pete got his language out of hock. Says he, "She d-done it with the clock;
  I reckon that she owns a flock. I d-dodged 'em all but one."
Up speaks the barkeep, Whisperin' Mike: "Yeah! Was it goin'? Did it strike?"
  "It was," says Pete, sarcastic-like, a-reachin' for his gun.

But Nell romped in and stopped the row. "Now mind," she whoops, "your weddin vow!"
  And at them lovin' words, somehow Old Pete begins to sink.
She grabbed him and he never shied, but hollers when he gits outside,
  "I love her, boys—but damn her hide!" And we-all takes a drink.

—HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

"Grand Country"

EVEN a scribbled word from Georges Surdez is welcome; but this editor, after perusing the five enclosed photographs, begs leave to be excused from having any Sahara. It might be fine for his complexion; but probably it would broil him down to a seed-wart sittin' on a sand dune . . .

Just got down from Berce Madlad and the outposts. This is grand country, just a little off the ordinary travel routes. Here's some dope that might get into C-F in default of stories—"Armistice day celebration in B. M. in tiny hotel, improvised band of German Legionnaires (fifes, mouth organs and *Teifelgeigers*) played all day for dancing—French, English songs and more German chants, including famous Riff song "In Doroces among the Rocks".

Met many friends of Legion's friends, chief among them Sergeant Schumacker, the man who was cited for bringing in Peckkoff (author of "The Bugle Sounds") when the major, then a captain, received the wound that cost him an arm. Schumacker is a fine man, 10 years of Legion, German company commander in the World War—Yser, Verdun (storm troops that took Donamount) husky, and with a great reputation out here. Has been all over the four regiments, and from Sous to Agadis, via Bel-Abbes, Saida, Bechan, Mogados, Darrakesh.

I have met many who spoke of him in the last year. He went out this morning with a *fatigere* party into dissidence (you are within rifle shot of hostile natives at Beni Nellel and curfew is sounded with guns—gives one a kick) so I said I was in a hurry and ran the other way. Say, the fellow who says you can't take moonlight photos is off as far as Sahara goes. Wait until I show you one taken with ordinary Kodak, post card size, in Bechar—St. Dauplimot of the auto machine guns fleet of cars there made it (19 minutes post) and it's a pip.

Writing on scrap in haste as P. O. is closing and others have cornered note paper. Also find it tough to write by hand; and picked small paper for that reason. —GEORGES SURDEZ, Kasbel, Tadla.

An Introduction

AS IS our old custom, we give the floor to the most recent recruit of our writer's brigade—the author of "The Mother Curse."

My name is an entirely new one in the fiction field. About myself—I am Anglo-Indian born, though now a resident of California. My relatives are in government school inspection and military service in India, and I am acquainted with the north of India, some portions of Burmah, south Siam and much of the Malay peninsula.—GLENN MACAULAY

Two Other Fellows

AS PRINTED on the first page of the Manila *Times*, the Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippine Islands voted to ask the Postmaster General to bar *Adventure* from the islands—because the good ladies thought the magazine pernicious and subversive of the morals of youth (whatever that means).

I got right up on my hind legs. So did a score or more of Island subscribers. And the response from this country and England was enormous.

In no case did a correspondent O. K. the indictment. Some were for hiring Charles Lindbergh to dash over, without delay, and bomb each and every women's club in P. I. Some thought that tar and feathers, in a few cases, would be sufficient. The more restrained wrote me letters; some of these are no more. As soon as they were taken from the envelopes they burst into blue, sulphuric flames and immediately were reduced to char . . .

All joshing aside. I wrote immediately to the Secretary of this Federation, expressing my astonishment and dismay. Had all of the building, thought, care—yes, even praying—gone so far askew? Was *Adventure* a magazine which wallowed in filth, which made a youthful reader worse than a moron? My own notion was directly opposite. During the editorship of Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, that of Joseph Cox, and my own, I am certain that no dirty story has reached the pages of *Adventure;* not even a story in which sex was the chief factor. Also, barring two minor exceptions in the course of twenty years—both "lit'ry" yarns which were double- and triple-starred by Mr. O'Brien—there has not been a frankly immoral tale in the magazine. I know. Right in front of me, here in my home study in Garden City, are shelves reaching to the ceiling. They hold every published volume of *Adventure.* And I have read every word of fiction in every volume.

Laugh that off.

It seems, though, that the good ladies made a slight mistake. They weren't looking at *Adventure*, at all. Herewith is a letter from their Secretary:

My dear Mr. Rud,

I have read your letter with a great deal of interest and I may add with deep regret. I think that your protest is well deserved and I wish to say that I am now sincerely sorry for listing *Adventure* in the magazines condemned by the Federated Women's Clubs of the Philippines.

The way the whole thing came about was like this: There has been serious condemnation out here, among intelligent and educated Filipinos, of the way the young generation are imitating the wild dancing, Cine vulgarities, flashy reading and general wildness of the younger generation in our own country. My feeling has led me to deprecate this, as a recent trip to the U. S. led me to believe that the newspapers, for various reasons, overstated the situation, that lurid articles misrepresented millions of our boys and girls, and that, though the War had wrought a more deleterious effect on our women than even on our men, that it was a phase and would pass.

I happen to be on the board of directors of the Women's Federated Clubs and we have, of course, discussed these matters because most of the ladies are mothers and keenly interested in anything which threatens their home life or their own children as well as those of others. It was brought to my attention by my own eyesight that a perfect deluge of cheap and trashy magazines were invading the best book stores and that a mushroom growth, was taking place, of little stands displaying lurid looking papers and magazines. I asked where these came from and was told, by a young Filipino, that an American negro was the agent and that he received tons of such mail. The best bookstore, on hearing there was criticism, withdrew the most offensive of the periodicals but they were multiplying elsewhere and even, I was told, sold at the railroad stations and on the piers and docks.

I then discussed the matter with the ladies at our regular meeting and suggested that we appeal to this Agent or to the Collector of Customs, to put a crimp in it. They saw no chance of having any influence with the Agent but appointed a committee to see the Collector. We saw the Asst. Collector and he seemed rather vague, said he did not read such stuff but that, if we could bring to him copies of objectionable magazines or periodicals, under the law, he could promptly stop their importation. We thought this impossible, for *we* do not ourselves read the kind of papers referred to and so we thanked him and came away.

I then suggested that we list such magazines as we thought unworthy and that a Committee be appointed to read them and to bring in a report. The President, a notable Filipina, at once made me Chairman and told me to go ahead. I said that I could not possibly read the magazines—they were many—and I disliked that sort of "literature." Many Filipino ladies offered, at once, to help me and did. I wish to say for them that their reports ran something like this: "Yes, I read so-and-so. I thought it awfully foolish and wild but it was not bad. I don't like the shooting and the wild riding and the idea that a boy or girl can walk out or run away from home and make their way to riches and sometimes power, unaided, with just a six-shooter and nerve. It isn't natural and it's dangerous."

I read most of the stuff. I am a busy woman and it nearly put my eyes out. But I had got into the thing, got the Federation into it, and I went through. Then I wrote the report. It was too strong. None of the Committee wished to sign it. I said: "All right. I will sign it and let it go at that."

I did not do it for any flash notoriety. I believed that as women we ought to do more than take care of orphans and sick children, clean up here and there, work for playgrounds. I had been a librarian for 24 years and I never had allowed such publications on the shelves or racks of the reading room. The Board filed the report. It came with something of a shock, later on, to hear it was about to be published. It was published and immediately Mr. Bush, the agent I had been told about, came to my office and made a strong protest. From what I could gather, he was particularly upset over *Adventure* and one other magazine—name now forgotten—being listed. I told him that I did not think it would affect one sale, in fact, it might augment them, but that I stood fast on the ground that Americans out here owed it to themselves and their Flag not to sell or to vend any article which was unworthy of themselves. He protested that your periodical was "clean as a hound's tooth" and that, as you say, it had more worth-while stories in it than practically any other published. Which was news to me.

We had a long talk. He talked well and I was glad to listen. I bought another copy of your magazine and, as he said, I saw nothing objectionable in it. I daresay it was the reading rapidly of all the "shootin' up" and mad careering round stuff, and the flashy pictures on most of them, that had fixed in my mind the general idea that, with few exceptions, the whole bunch were a printed menace to decent living and straight thinking. I tried to be fair. I regret that I included your magazine and I wish to tell you that I am not vituperative and not given to injuring others or their business. I have had my own struggle with life.

The editors here made no editorial comment but one or two laughed at me and told me I had cheaply advertised a lot of magazines and, one or two, told me that some of them they glanced over themselves. So, it did no harm to anyone—but myself. I offer you my personal apology and accept all responsibility.

Very truly yours,
—BESSIE A. DWYER,
Manila, P. I.

Apology accepted, Miss Dwyer, and thank you!

—ANTHONY M. RUD

ASK ADVENTURE

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Power

A CUSTOM-MADE arm that bears the distinction of being the most powerful rifle made in this country.

Request:—"I would appreciate your telling me what is the highest power rifle made in the U. S. and what company it is manufactured by. Please give me the range of this rifle, and how can I obtain a catalogue from this company?"

—J. W. GIBSON, Dillon, S. C.

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The most powerful rifle made in the United States today, as far as I am aware, is the .475 No. 2, made by the following firm: Messrs. Griffin & Howe, 234-240 E. 39th St., New York, N. Y. It is a custom-made arm, and is of the finest finish, quality, and accuracy insofar as one can expect from such a powerful weapon. It is what is known as a Magnum Mauser, and is made only to special order.

As to its range, I can not say, never having fired the arm, but it throws a 480 grain bullet at 2200 feet per second, and gives a striking power of 5152 foot pounds.

This rifle is very costly, being handmade, and is only put out by the makers to order; they will send you their catalogue for twenty-five cents in stamps, which will contain all information in regard to the arms they make.

As far as a commercial arm goes, one for which you can get ammunition easily, and the rifle itself anywhere, I can recommend the Winchester Model 54 or the Model 30 Remington Express, either taking the .30 Government Model 1906 cartridge. This with bullets of 180 grains gives 2956 foot pounds energy, and is of very long range, as well. They will handle bullets of 110 to 220 grains weight, and with energy sufficient for anything in America, or in the world, short of elephant or African rhino or buffalo. And they have killed them very neatly, when used by a good shot.

Diving

STEVE BRODIE had little on this man who jumped from a ninety-foot tower into a four-foot tank.

Request:—"1. Could you inform me as to the record high dive?

2. Do high divers use any means of protecting their bodies?

3. What is the general depth of water required? Is the percentage of fatalities great?

4. What effect does high diving have on the body, both temporary or permanent?"

—R. L. CLAY, Fort Worth, Texas.

Reply, by Mr. L. De B. Handley:—1. No official record for high diving exists and the claimed records have proven to be so untrustworthy when investigated that no faith can be placed on them. The highest dive I ever heard of was a dive taken from a cliff in Hawaii said to be 210 feet above sea level, but I do not vouch for the authenticity of the report.

2. Some high divers use padded helmets, but the majority of those I have known resorted to no artificial protection, merely locking their hands above the head to meet the impact of the water.

3. The depth requirement for high diving depends entirely on the skill of the diver. There was a man here in New York who took many a drop from a 90-foot tower into a 4-foot tank and never so much as bruised himself; numberless people have been injured or killed diving from a much lower height into deeper water.

4. The same applies to a large extent to your question concerning the effect on the body. I have known professionals to go through years of exhibition work without suffering the least trouble, apparently. They were masters of the art and never careless. On the other hand, many a high diver has sustained temporary or permanent injury. It is an easy matter to dislocate the shoulders, injure the spine, fracture the ear drums, suffer brain concussion, split the eyeballs, and so on. It is a dangerous game, at best.

Stamps

A FEW words about the sales department of the American Philatelic Society.

Request:—"Does the American Philatelic Society sell stamps?" —F. MECKSHER.

Reply, by Mr. H. A. Davis:—The Society does not deal in stamps. It is a society of over 4000 members banded together for mutual help in stamp collecting. It does, however, maintain a Sales Department for the benefit of its members. Members mount their duplicates in blank books furnished by the Department and send them to the Sales Manager. The latter sends them out in lots of ten to twelve books on circuit to eight or ten members on a circuit. The first member removes what he wishes and sends the packet on to the next member as listed on the circuit sheet, and so on until it is returned to the Sales Manager. Each member reports to the Sales Manager when he forwards the circuit to the next and remits for stamps removed. Finally the Sales Manager remits the amount sold to each owner.

I am inclosing literature which will give you an idea of the benefits of the Society. The Society magazine, the *American Philatelist,* sent gratis to members monthly, carries many dealers' advertisements.

French Oceania

LIVING conditions on the Island of Tahiti.

Request:—"Would you please give a little information on the island of Tahiti and the city of Papeete.

I would like to know if a white man can get work and if it is a healthy place for me. I am advised to go to a hot climate for my health.

Could you tell me what a small hut would cost?"

—MR. EDWARD REEVES, Toledo, Ohio.

Reply, by Mr. J. S. Meagher:—The island of Tahiti has an area of 400 sq. miles with a shoreline of about 120 miles. 3660 miles from San Francisco, it takes ten days to make the journey on the mail steamers of the Union Steamship Co. of New Zealand. The interior of the island is uninhabited and consists of mountainous jungles.

The mountains are the highest in the South Pacific. Outside of Papeete the only towns if such they may be called, consists of straggling villages along the coast road which extends around the island. The population consists mainly of native, mixed native blood and Chinese. There are about 12,500 inhabitants all told, of which 5000 are in Papeete.

Papeete is the capital and principal port and is the seat of Government of all the islands of French Oceania. The town now has many of the amenities of civilization such as electric lighting, government hospital, French and American doctors, good water supply and telephone service. There is no newspaper but a wireless report is available daily at the post office.

The official language is French and also the native Tahitian. English is also used to some extent. Papeete is the trading center of this part of the Pacific, and schooners and other vessels are constantly coming and going.

Cost of living is as high as in the United States with the exception of native fruits and food products. There are a few things which can be purchased cheaper than at home, such as light tropical garments, etc., but the cost of living is not to be considered cheap. I would not advise any one to go out to live there unless he had an income of not less than $60.00 a month. In regard to building a small hut I may say that the actual cost of construction of such a dwelling would not be very much but it would be necessary to go outside of Papeete to carry out this idea. The Government is opposed, generally speaking, to this kind of thing, that is living in primitive or near primitive style. A number of whites and others have tried out this idea of recent years and many have abandoned this style of living. There is a tax of $20.00 on all aliens who remain in the colony longer than ten days.

The climate of Tahiti is good, for the Tropics, and although very hot at times it is not usually excessive. It is somewhat enervating to whites unused to Tropical climates and renders them inclined to ease and little effort of any kind.

Rain falls almost all the year round and is practically constant from December to March, when heavy rains are experienced.

White men can live there for years without showing any deterioration of health if they avoid excesses and dissipation of every kind. The Tahitian climate is said to be very good for rheumatic troubles.

Turkey Call

PERHAPS Mr. Thompson, or some other reader, will care to add to the following discussion of "game calling."

Request:—"I am not at all sure that my questions will come under your department of "Ask Adventure." I desire information on the subject of wild turkey calls, and incidentally wild duck calls. The turkey calls in particular. Types, merits, approximate prices. Where available (definite address), and method of employing them.

Just prior to the past hunting season here, I procured a turkey leg bone and learned the trick. I then improved on that (in my own estimation) with a pipe-stem and small part of a cow's horn. A rancher nearby has some tame turkeys on which I experimented with rather marked success, all of which made me right proud of myself, so on the first morning of the season I hit out bright and early with great enthusiasm. Was successful with a deer, as I understand that game and was lucky. But for nine weary days the turkeys made an absolute monkey out of me.

I saw turkey every day and some days several times (when I didn't use my call) but I did not get one single shot. We had a little snow, so I would track them (not bragging, but I am considered fairly good at that). After trailing them a bit I would find where they had cut in behind me and were on *my tracks*, following me up! That was nearly the last straw. So I have decided to get an early start on this call business and be ready for them next year." —W. S. LEE, Hillsboro, N. M.

Reply, by Mr. Earnest W. Shaw:—I was very much interested in your letter and exceedingly regret that I am unable to give you material aid. Suggest that you write John B. Thompson (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure*. He has, I believe, done much turkey shooting in years gone by and may have just the dope you want. Personally I have never done any calling, nor have I ever seen turkeys successfully called to within shooting distance, although men have claimed to me that they could turn the trick. I have a suspicion that an old gobbler is much easier called during the "treading period" than any other time. I used to hunt them on the Rio Piedra in southwestern Colorado and northern N. Mexico years ago, but we used to ride the ridges at a high lope and flush a bunch. Then fall off and use the rifle as they sailed off down the cañon. It would surprise you how close shooting one can do if you have luck in a following rear end shot. They sail very steady and make a great target.

But to return to the calling game: I have heard the sound some would-be callers make with the help of a turkey leg bone, and I have never thought that it would fool me for a minute, yet it might at that, under certain circumstances. I am informed that some of the Florida "crackers" can sure enough call turkey, any time and any place, but as I have not been in that country cannot vouch for it. But I have seen it tried in several localities by men claiming to be expert at it, but without a successful demonstration of their powers. Always there were local conditions and circumstances against the caller.

As for duck calls, look in any sporting goods catalogue for them. There are several kinds on the market, most of them if not all of them, good. Any one can use them and they are so life-like that they would deceive ducks and men alike. I am quite sure you can obtain them from Abercrombie & Fitch, New York, and also in Denver, but have lost track of the firm names there.

Your telling of turkeys following up your track sounds all right. I have not happened to have such an experience with turkeys, but it surely works with mountain lion. If you are in a lion country, take it on the next fresh snow, find a fresh track, and start in following it. Go fast until you are sure that you have jumped him, then proceed as carefully as possible as to noise but as rapidly as you can, on the trail. Keep on it until you either come on to his track following you, or until you know from the sign that he realizes some one is following him, then pick out your spot as for wind and vision, and lie in wait for him. It's almost a sure shot. Nine out of ten lions will do it, and generally not take a long circle before hitting your track, and they usually stay on the track until they can see what it is that is following them.

If the wind will let you, traverse the side of a ridge just a nice shooting distance from the top, then bob over and follow back a little way on the opposite side, taking your stand where you can see your back track at good shooting distance. You can most always pick such a layout after you have run onto the lion track following yours. Be on the watch for a likely ambush, for if he begins to circle as though to cross your back track you'll not have to wait long to take your stand.

Hope you can get what you want from Thompson. I cannot recall ever seeing a turkey call advertised on the market. By the way, none of the callers I heard ever tried to make an imitation of the gobble. They all used the put—putting sound or the treble used so much by both hens and toms. I doubt if an instrument could be made to produce a deceiving gobble.

Alaska

FOR the most part, prospecting has given way to the business of mining.

Request:—"Is it possible for a young man to obtain good work in Alaska? I do not mean work as a common laborer. I am interested especially in railroad work. Is there a good outlook as to the future of railroads in Alaska?

How is the fur industry? Do prospectors still take much gold from the Yukon and other rivers?

How much would it cost a man to live a few months without work?"

—F. J. NOSKER, Minneapolis, Minn.

Reply, by Mr. Theodore S. Solomons:—Any young man of good health, average ability and good character who doesn't expect to succeed at once in Alaska can do well and obtain a foothold in the country if he has stamina and patience.

There are a few short railroads, and one—the Government road—which is quite a long railroad, which would perhaps give you a chance if you waited your opportunity for employment. Alaska is a very big country, with very little mileage of either railroad or roads.

The fur industry is fair. Better than in the United States, though there are places here which are remote which would be better than many localities up there that are more or less trapped out. Prospectors still hunt for gold, but it is a poor business. Few accomplish anything, though it is a free and healthy life. *Mining,* as a business or industry, is quite a different matter, however. It is a good business for the man who takes to it intelligently and learns it thoroughly. There is a steady output of metal from Alaska, mining remaining the leading industry. You could go up there and live a few months on fifty or seventy-five dollars a month, after paying your way up there. The fare from Minnesota to Southern Alaska would be about $150, more or less.

I advise you to send to the Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., for their free pamphlets on Alaska and study them. Then, if you wish, write me again for special information and advice.

Boomerang

THE idea is to aim where you don't mean to hit.

Request:—"Could you tell me how to make a boomerang? As long as it is practical, the details don't matter. Also would you give me a few hints on the method of throwing this weapon?"

—JOHN NEAGLE, Port Pirie, South Australia.

Reply, by Mr. Alan Foley:—As regards the material to be used, select a good hardwood; soft woods are unsuitable because they are almost invariably too light in weight. The greater the weight of wood the better the flight of the boomerang.

There is no fixed size for a boomerang; they vary from about 9 to 20 inches in width. As an Australian resident, you will be aware of the general shape, but the arc described by a boomerang in its flight is regulated by two factors: (1) the speed of propulsion, (2) the angle of construction.

In regard to the second of these, the more acute the angle, the smaller the arc. If, however, the angle is too acute, you will not be able to throw the boomerang at all, and for that reason, when you are trying to make a boomerang you should not have an angle of less than 120 degrees. Boomerangs made by the aboriginals vary from 120 to 160 degrees.

Your best plan will be to select a suitable piece of wood, and then to whittle it down into the required shape. In doing this the inside edge will need to be trimmed down fairly sharply while the back edge should be left moderately thick. Measurements here might well be 1/16th" for the inside edge and 1/4" for the back edge. This edge should taper as it gets to the point, and each point should be moderately thin in comparison with the butt of the boomerang. The edges should not be left square, but should be sand-papered off and nicely rounded.

After having smoothed down the edges, you could apply a coat of oil, leave it to soak in for a while and then give it a coat of hard varnish.

I am afraid I cannot give you any practical hints regarding the throwing of a boomerang beyond stressing the necessity that the sweep of the arm should be steady and not jerky.

Your best plan would be to get out into an open paddock and experiment for yourself; firstly, by throwing in a simple round-arm motion. By doing this you can watch the flight of a boomerang, and from it you will soon know the direction in which to throw when you desire to hit any object.

I mention the direction here, because in trying to hit an object you do not throw directly at that object. After a little practice you will find you can make a boomerang return to the thrower.

Sea

LIEUTENANT GREENE explains just what happens when a ship goes down.

Request:—"Does a submarine when rammed and sunk go to the bottom, or does it seek its own level somewhere beneath the waves and stay there until beaten up by currents of the sea? Has the specific gravity of the water anything to do with holding the sub up from the bottom, if it does not go all the way to the bottom?

Also, is the specific gravity of the water the same at the surface of the ocean as on the floor of the ocean?

These questions could not be settled by several of my friends who were seamen during the War."

—P. L. HENN, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Reply, by Lieutenant F. V. Greene:—A ship floats because the total weight of the ship and all on board is equal to the weight of the volume of water she displaces. A ship that is light will float with a certain water line; stow cargo aboard and she sinks in the water till the extra weight equals the water displaced; then she will float at the depth. You have probably noted that a loaded ship is always deeper in the water than a light one. So it is with a submarine, if she is rammed, and takes enough water aboard to give her more weight than the water she displaces, she will sink till she reaches the bottom.

The impression that objects sunk in deep water remain suspended above the bottom on account of water pressure is very common, but is wrong.

The following should be remembered:

1. The force of gravity is in effect in the air, on the land, on the water, and under the water.
2. The pressure is equal in all directions at any given depth.
3. Water is practically incompressible, so its density at any depth is only a fraction that at the surface.

Now, although the pressure at the ocean bottom is measured in tons per square inch, the pressure is equal in all directions at any given depth. Were this not so, the water itself would not remain in equilibrium. If an object is immersed in water at any depth, it will rise if its weight is less than the water it displaces, for instance a cork; it will remain suspended if the weight is exactly the same as the water that it displaces. An example of this is a steel ship floating; it will sink if its weight exceeds that of the water is displaces, for instance a submarine taking on a great weight of water after a collision.

If water were compressible, so that its density increased with the depth to any appreciable extent, then objects which sank at the surface would in all probability drop to a level where they would be in balance with the density of surrounding liquid, and there remain in suspension. Water, however, is practically incompressible, and its density at, say, two thousand fathoms (six feet to a fathom) is only a fractional percentage greater than at the surface. From this it follows that any vessel which is rammed and takes on a great amount of water will continue to sink till it reached the bottom, and this is borne out by the facts.

Specific gravity is the ratio of the weight of a body to that of an equal volume of some other standard substance. The difference of weights mentioned in the foregoing is the difference in specific gravity of the vessel or other substance and the water.

You will note in the foregoing that owing to the fact that water is incompressible, the difference of specific gravity makes very little difference between water at the surface and that in the depths. From this it can be seen that any vessel under the circumstances mentioned will sink till she reaches the bottom.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

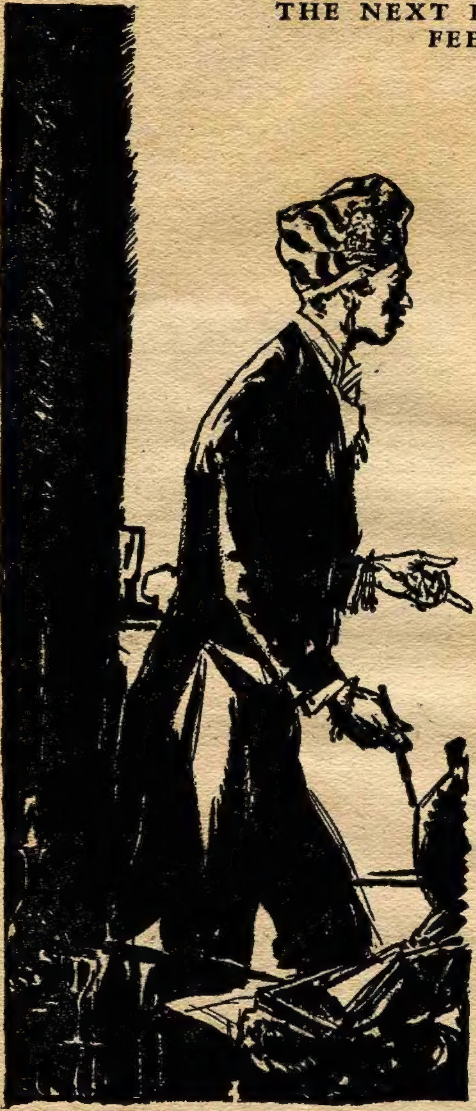
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A Complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

THE NEXT ISSUE OF ADVENTURE
FEBRUARY 15th



JEWELS FOR A LADY

THE Oxford-bred Maharajah was devilishly cunning. But John Doyle, soldier-of-fortune, was rather well versed in Oriental wiles himself. And he believed there was but one throat in all the world fit to wear the sinister necklace of blood amber . . .

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

HAVE you been reading Adventure's *great War novel,* **"Cry Havoc"?** *The second and concluding part is even more thrilling than the first. You can not afford to miss it!*

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